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“Getting Down the Road”:
Understanding Stable Mobility in an
American Circus

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Human Geography
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Abstract

A circus, perceived as a fleeting performative event by its audience, presents a life of continually restored movement and work to the people that produce the performance. This is the starting point for the *stable mobility* concept presented in this research. The circus represents a situation of continuing and stable physical movement in which the production of movement continually creates a recognizable, yet flexible, situation. This thesis demonstrates the value of stable mobility for understanding experiences and productions of cultural geographical phenomena that are flexible, continually restored, and reworked to be stable, yet also specific, at each restoration.

The thesis argues that stable mobility becomes apparent through mobile research perspectives. A *mobile perspective* is viewing the lived relationships and processes of mobility from the place of mobility and finding ways to recover the practices and experiences of being mobile. This is done, not by adding physical movement, but by considering the context of movement.

The research presents ideas of *performance* and *memory* as the ways in which a circus manages to reproduce and transform its culture of mobility by calling on past formulations of circus mobility in ways specific to each performance. Significantly, the thesis presents a figuring of mobility, understood as constantly renewed relationships between people, materials, and memory made flexible through improvisational performances, as necessary to the maintenance and preservation of circus life.

Through a five month *ethnography* conducted on the roads, and in the tent, of Kelly Miller Circus' 2008 season, this research discovered how, through continually restored and flexible performances of memory, this performative culture of movement maintains and preserves its mobility by continually becoming temporarily immobile. In order to reflect the varied aspects of stable mobility at work in Kelly Miller Circus, each ethnographic description and analytical engagement is written in a different performative style.

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Introduction: A circus view of mobility

This is Kelly Miller Circus. It is created in much the same way, day after day, in a different town each day for nine months out of the year. To each of these towns, East Tawakoni (fig. I.1), Avella (fig. I.2), and Lima (fig. I.3), Kelly Miller Circus is experienced as a singular event. A group of people, animals, and trucks have taken over a bit of their town and will perform for one night only. They will do the seemingly impossible: set-up, perform, pack up, and be gone by morning. Tomorrow the only trace of their presence here is a poster on a pole and the memories and photographs of the audience. The town sees them as fleeting, exciting, perhaps slightly frightening and slightly disruptive.



Figure I.1: East Tawakoni, TX.



Figure I.2: Avella, PA.



Figure I.3: Lima, NY.

The view from Kelly Miller Circus is different. To the circus each of these towns is experienced as just another day. It is slightly different from the one before, but more alike than not. They are in the town for one night only as usual. Once again they will arrive and begin their day. They will set up, perform, pack up and leave. Tomorrow they will do it again somewhere else, but not necessarily somewhere new. They are living, working, slightly exhausted, slightly bored.

From the stationary perspective of the town the circus is an event experienced with no knowledge of what came before their town and what will come after. They will remember the tent and the animals. The sights and smells will linger in memory as 'the circus.' From the mobile perspective of Kelly Miller Circus each town is approached with the knowledge of what happened there last season, what happened yesterday, what must happen today and what all those experiences mean for tomorrow. If these towns linger in memory they will be memories of audience numbers, town amenities like a clean laundry, or environmental conditions of mud or rain.

The shift in perspective changes the story of the processes of mobility in the circus from disruption to maintenance, from excitement and romance of the travelling performer to the daily life and work of the travelling performer. The town experience of the circus, described above, mirrors particular approaches to mobile cultures and processes that are concerned with managing the disruption caused by their movement through stationary societies. The circus experience of their own mobility process, also described above, reflects a growing interest in the maintenance of mobility processes. The circus perspective also presents another way to approach mobility by viewing it through the processes of performance and memory. This thesis will describe and discuss the ways in which the living memory of the circus shapes its present and future

performances, both in the **ring**¹ and on the road. By viewing the continual reproduction of a daily routine and rhythm of mobility that is consistent as well as flexible, this thesis will demonstrate not only how Kelly Miller Circus maintains its particular form of mobility but also how it assures its continuation into the future.

The difference in experience is the inspiration for the concept of stable mobility which is the centre point of this thesis. This term, *stable mobility*, refers to three intertwining situations at work in Kelly Miller Circus. The first is a situation of continuing movement. The second is an understanding that the production of movement continually creates a recognizable situation. The third is understanding that *stable* and *recognizable* do not mean fixity or continual fluidity, but instead flexibility.

Using the case of an American circus, this thesis shows the place of Kelly Miller Circus in a constant state of moving from town to town. It also shows that the processes and activities necessary to move the circus from town to town are also necessary in the maintenance of the recognizable place of Kelly Miller to the people of Kelly Miller. That last point is key. To the stationary observer, one circus is pretty much like the next. One performance of Kelly Miller Circus is almost indistinguishable from the next day's performance. However, to the mobile observer within the circus the general patterns and experiences of each day on Kelly Miller Circus are mundane, yet at the same time specific to each day. The details of the patterns and daily experience are subtly, but significantly, different because they take place on a different stage each day as the circus moves from town to town.

This concept of stable mobility is, I believe, most apparent when a mobile perspective is taken in research. In this thesis, a *mobile perspective* refers to the kinds of questions asked and the methods utilized to answer those questions. Mobility research tends to assume a stationary perspective when viewing movement. By that I

¹ Throughout the thesis terms specific to circus culture are indicated by bold text at their first use in the text. Please refer to Appendix 1, Glossary, for definitions.

mean mobility research tends to approach a movement, or network, or potential movement from, or in relation to, an immobile or stationary perspective. This tends to produce rather one-dimensional accounts of mobility processes that speak to the disruption, transformation, or mundaneness of mobility processes to stationary subjects or locations. When I discuss approaching mobility research through a mobile perspective, I am advocating for research questions and methods that attend to the context of movement. It is about approaching mobility while it is in progress. However, it is not just about adding physical movement to traditional forms of research. Mobility research is moving beyond documenting pure movement to understanding mobility as complex processes of lived relations (Adey 2010). A mobile perspective is about viewing the lived relationships and processes of mobility from the place of mobility. It is about considering the concerns and practices and meanings of mobility for the people that are moving. It is about finding a way to recover the practices and experiences of being mobile that speak to the ways in which mobility processes are produced again and again. As I discovered in the course of this thesis, by taking the mobile perspective of the circus, it is not always the physical movement that allows for, and maintains, the reproduction of mobility processes.

Kelly Miller Circus is a mobile place without location. The show has lived, worked, and travelled in relatively the same way since 1936. It is connected to a tradition of performance and way of life dating back to 1825. It is not necessarily a new form of mobile life transformed by increasing processes and technologies of globalization (Cresswell 2010). The materials of increasing connection and mobility are present. Most houses have a satellite dish, laptop with mobile internet, navigation systems and multiple mobile phones. However, these items do not necessarily enhance the mobility of the circus (Pooley et al. 2006) and in many situations do not work due to the particular processes of mobility at work in the American circus. This research,

grounded in the mobile place of Kelly Miller Circus, illustrates that it is the lived relationships between the people, materials, and memories of the show that keep it moving down the road, sometimes regardless of its modern materials. Kelly Miller Circus is a performative and mobile lifestyle and livelihood that is frequently described as a dying traditional lifestyle of entertainment (Carmeli 2001; Hammarstrom 2008; Templeton 1955; Truzzi 1968). However, throughout this thesis, I show that the lifestyle and livelihood of Kelly Miller is one that is constantly renewing and restoring itself through its daily performances and movement. It is not in the scope of this research to speculate generally about the fate of the American circus community, but it is within the interests of the thesis to investigate the processes that allow for and ensure that Kelly Miller Circus continues to perform and move. Through a five month ethnography conducted on the roads and lots of Kelly Miller Circus' 2008 season, I discovered how, through continually restored and flexible performances of memory, this 'traditional' performative culture of movement maintains and preserves its mobility by continually becoming temporarily immobile. Surprisingly, the importance of the ability to become repeatedly immobile was presented by forcing a mobile perspective theoretically and methodologically.

The co-presence of tradition and modern technology in Kelly Miller Circus present an interesting case for studying how processes of mobility are conducted in light of the recent 'new' interest in all things mobile and a 'new' interest in the maintenance of mobility systems (Adey and Bissell 2010). The stable mobility concept relates, in some ways, to Urry's new mobilities paradigm in that I am arguing for movement to be seen through movement which can present new ways to understand mobility as well as an interest in the materials of mobility. However, I do not link myself to Urry's call for a 'movement-driven' social science which seemingly rethinks the nature of the social world (Urry 2007, p7, 43). Stable mobility also speaks to Cresswell's call for

investigations into the politics of mobility which, among other things, views mobility as not just pure motion, but also as a way of being in the world that is practiced, experienced, embodied, and represented in a variety of very specific ways (Cresswell 2010). Stable mobility approaches mobility in Kelly Miller Circus as processes of performance and memory which are continually restored and renewed through consistent, yet flexible, patterns and routines.

This thesis presents processes of performance and memory as the force behind circus movement. It also presents these processes, and not increasing mobile technology, as the way in which the circus manages to produce, reproduce, and transform its processes of mobility by calling on past formulations of circus mobility in ways specific to each performance (Cresswell 2010, p20). By addressing mobility through the case of a circus, the concept of stable mobility incorporates theories of performance and memory that highlight processes of flexibility and negotiations in the notion of stable and recognizable (Normark 2006). The processes of performance and memory at work in the maintenance of Kelly Miller's mobility create a context in which to understand how processes of mobility are maintained and stabilized through constantly renewed relationships between people, materials, and memory.

The questions addressed by this thesis centre on fleshing out the concept of stable mobility in the case of an American circus as well as the significance of this concept to mobility research and Cultural Geography. In the course of this thesis, I will demonstrate the value of the concept of stable mobility for understanding:

- the stable work that maintains mobility processes.
- the processes of mobilization that maintain stability.
- the significance of 'flexibility' in the maintenance of a stable and mobile situation.

To answer these questions, I self-consciously forced a mobile perspective in order to observe the mobility processes of an American circus that maintain the place, performances, and memories of Kelly Miller Circus. Exploring how performance and memory create and affect mobility processes turn the emphasis of this thesis toward the culture of mobility instead of the mere mechanics of mobility. This culture of mobility, observed and experienced through an ethnographic method, reveals a relationship between the place of Kelly Miller Circus and the towns through which it moves that is dependent upon the flexibility of Kelly Miller and the disruptions to their performances created by the town in the form of the lot provided. Viewing circus mobility through a mobile perspective shows each stationary town to be a disruptive element to the processes of mobility of the circus. However, as this thesis will demonstrate, the disruptions caused by each town are also shown to be tools for the maintenance of those processes. Performances of mobility are continually restored and renewed, and even transformed, through continual acts of improvisation by the people, materials, and memory of Kelly Miller Circus in the seasonal performance of getting down the road.

Chapter 1 presents the concepts and theories utilized in the understanding of stable mobility in Kelly Miller Circus. Here mobility is approached as meaningfully restored and lived relationships between people, materials, and memory. In Kelly Miller Circus, and the American circus community in general, performance and memory play a large role in determining the lived relations of a working circus. This chapter presents Schechner's theory of performance as *restored behaviour* as a way to understand how the processes of mobility are repeated day after day, season after season. This theory of performance offers an understanding of performance that is flexible in its restoration despite always being recognizable as an 'original' referenced in the current restoration of behaviour. This chapter also discusses a concept of

memory that is forgetful, and creative, in the restoration of daily life and performance, through the use of *traces* (Pearson and Shanks 2001). Together, the discussions of performance and memory present *improvisation* as a necessary act of maintenance which provides flexibility while stabilizing the processes of mobility in Kelly Miller Circus.

Chapter 2 presents the methodological aspect of the thesis which centres around a five month ethnography with Kelly Miller Circus in 2008. This chapter discusses how an ethnographic method was best suited to the project primarily due to its ability to engage directly with the life of mobility present in the circus but also due to the tendency for an ethnographic method to reflect characteristics of the stable mobility concept such as an expectation of disruption and flexibility. The chapter then describes the field experience and the four distinct reworkings of research practice during the five months, each reflecting a change in practical circumstances of the field but also creating a new opportunities for the research and data collected based on my continually changing role within the social fabric of the show. The importance and significance of engaging in a mobile method when investigating processes of mobility is discussed in its potential to present unexpected or unusual processes of mobility, in this case processes of becoming immobile and improvisation, which may also prove significant beyond mobility research. Finally, the chapter describes the narrative analysis inspired by the fieldwork and how it resulted in three analytical chapters written in three distinct styles.

Chapter 3 presents a brief historical account of the American circus tradition which includes brief discussions of three particular historical locations in the United States that are relevant context to American circus history and this thesis in particular. The chapter then presents a brief history of Kelly Miller Circus and a general description of its seasonal and daily operation. This chapter illustrates, in a general

way, how the processes of mobility at work in Kelly Miller Circus are part of a larger, historical, bundle of performative and mobile processes. This presents the processes of mobility as specific to Kelly Miller Circus but also having the potential to allow the past to inform the present, and future, processes of the show (Cresswell 2010). The ability of the past to break into, and inform, the present illustrates the role of memory in the preservation and maintenance of mobility processes and performances in Kelly Miller Circus. This is a theme continually addressed throughout the following chapters.

Chapter 4 is the first of three analytical engagements with the concept of stable mobility in Kelly Miller Circus. It is presented as a journal of movement organized temporally over one day's routine of mobility practice but spread over nine locations from the 2008 season. The journal documents the continually restored and renewed processes of mobility through descriptions and discussions of the lived relationships between the people and materials of Kelly Miller in their daily performances of mobility. In discussing the stable work that maintains the show's mobility, this chapter centres on the daily drive between towns and how it is rendered almost invisible in memory, despite the overwhelming presence of vehicles and mobile materials. Through these discussions the chapter illustrates how the people and materials of Kelly Miller Circus maintain their continual movement by actively 'forgetting' the drive through performances of demobilization and restoring the drive through performances of mobilization. The presentational style along with the chapter's concluding statements illustrates how the subtle differences of each day are forgotten and restored in the performative ritual of 'Just One Day.' Highlighting the performative concept of ritual in conjunction with the theory of performance as restored behaviour presents another way to view the way in which mobility processes are produced and maintained.

While Chapter 4 centres on the act of driving, Chapter 5 revolves around the acts in the tent and is presented as a script of movement performances for the stage of

Kelly Miller Circus in which each character describes and explains their movements on the lot. In order to illustrate the importance of processes of mobilization to the perceived and recognized stability of the show, this chapter illustrates how the performances within the ritual of movement are cued by stages created through the performances of demobilization. It looks at how particular performances in the ritual of movement, introduced in Chapter 4, are specific to, and affected by, the stage on which they are performed. In order to highlight the importance of the performances of demobilization and mobilization to the stability of Kelly Miller's stage, this chapter illustrates, through its discussion and presentational style, how performances are affected and restored when Kelly Miller Circus stops moving (Cresswell 2010, p26). The chapter concludes by discussing the significance of understanding mobilization processes as necessary to the creation of a stable stage on which Kelly Miller Circus can perform not only its acts but also its ritual of movement. This chapter also introduces a discussion about the necessity of disruption to the maintenance of mobility processes and a related stability of situation. This discussion is continued in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6 explores how Kelly Miller Circus maintains flexibility in its mobility performances and how that flexibility ensures a continuance of the recognizable and stable processes of the show. The chapter discusses Kelly Miller's self-imposed 'responsibility to play' and its role in maintaining the practice of improvisation. In a traditional presentation style, the chapter outlines four categories of improvisation utilized on the lot to maintain the processes of mobility as well as a stable and recognizable place of Kelly Miller Circus. The improvisations that occur on a show, and individual, level are discussed as 'acts of maintenance.' The chapter discusses an improvised memory at work in the previous chapters and in the production of acts of maintenance to demonstrate how memory works to produce and maintain stable

mobility in Kelly Miller Circus. Finally, the chapter concludes by discussing the significance of continually utilizing improvisation, to deal with the continual subtle disruptions caused by the stationary locations of town and lot, to common representations of circus life and mobile lifestyles in general. It suggests that the use of a mobile perspective highlighted the way in which regular disruptions created through the constant change of lot and weather conditions are moments of refocusing and maintenance to the mobility processes of Kelly Miller Circus which create a stable and recognizable place of Kelly Miller Circus on the move. This observation, of the necessity of disruption to the stability and maintenance of mobile situations, presents another way to address and understand the relationships between mobile and stationary places.

The thesis concludes by discussing the significant conceptual and empirical findings of the work which resulted from forcing a mobile perspective conceptually, empirically, and methodologically. The contributions of this research to understandings of the circus and mobile methods are linked to the processes of performance and memory utilized in the understanding of how mobility is maintained within the show but also how the continual presence of physical movement also maintains the processes of performance and memory. Within these discussions the particular importance of, and dependence on, a constant flow of subtle disruption is discussed in relation to common representations of mobility meaning. In the case of Kelly Miller Circus the subtle disruptions caused by the stationary towns through which it moves presents mobility as necessary for creating a recognizably stable situation for the people of Kelly Miller Circus. This is a relationship between mobile cultures and disruption that is not frequently found in mobility research or circus studies and shows the significance of a mobile perspective to developing theorizations of mobility in Cultural Geography more generally. Throughout the concluding discussion I reflect on the inspirations and

roadblocks to the research provided by a mobile methodology centred on the practice of
'getting down the road.'

Chapter 1

Approaching Stable Mobility: Studying mobility and the American circus

“The movement is nothing, it is what you have to do.”

Vladimir Smirnoff, Interview, Circus World Museum, August 17, 2004

Vladimir Smirnoff's observation sparked my interest in the question of mobility, in many ways. He seems to say that in circus life, a life seemingly defined by movement from place to place, movement itself is irrelevant. I wondered how this was possible. Later, I would frame this conceptually as a question of, what I call, stable mobility. This was a 'lightbulb' moment for my mobility research. To me, the continual movement was important and interesting because, from my stationary point of view, the continual movement and related activities seemed different and interesting. This assumption about mobility was based on the context of movement which seems to mirror mobility literature. It is easy to claim that everything is on the move and that modern life is characterized by an increased mobility of materials and people (Sheller and Urry 2006) if mobility is viewed from a stationary point. I wondered how mobility would appear if viewed from a mobile point. I thought perhaps the daily movement and related activities of the American circus could be understood as unremarkable, as 'nothing,' if investigated while moving. I questioned what it meant for mobility research when the daily movement of circus life and related activities of setting up and packing down could be so easily forgotten. It occurred to me that along with investigating the performances and practices of mobility (Cresswell and Dixon 2002) perhaps the memory, or forgetting, of mobility may also be helpful in understanding how constant daily movement becomes 'nothing.'

The place of an American circus presented a suitable case for mobility research for another particular reason. While being a place that is continually on the move, it is also a place considered to be on the ‘fringe’ of American society (Feiler 1995). This relegation to ‘the fringe’ seems to also relegate it to a place of disruption or transgression, which is present in circus literature (Bouissac 1976; Carmeli 1988; Little 1995), but also mirroring a common perception of the disruptive or transgressive natures of mobile communities (Cresswell 1996, 2001c; Hetherington 2000; Sibley 1995). While the circus is considered the ‘fringe’ of American society and a common metaphor for disruption and chaos, the circus is also labelled an important part of American identity. “The circus occupies a warm spot in the heart of America. It is a favoured institution, a part of the national lore, a part of our patriotism” (Fox and Parkinson 1969, p10). The issue of national identity is beyond the scope of this project, however the incorporation of a seemingly disruptive and chaotic community into the collective identity of a nation is an interesting use of mobility to offer a stability in identity. In this thesis I argue that the context of movement in research plays a role in how mobility processes are approached and utilized.

“A circus is just a title and ring curb.”

Scott O’Donnell, Interview, Circus World Museum, September 2, 2004

It seems there is something missing in mobility research, a mobile perspective. It seems an odd statement, yet somehow a mobile take on mobility is frequently absent (Symes 2007, p447). Scott O’Donnell defines the circus by its name and its performance stage. Everything else can, and does, change from day to day, season to season, yet is always recognized as a circus. The circus is a place of constant change,

yet it is always recognized as a circus. The work done to maintain the title and ring curb must be stable as well as mobile thus producing a stable mobility.

Following the 'light bulb' moment about the importance of movement context, my interest in mobility memory, and the lack of a mobile perspective in mobility research, this thesis demonstrates the value of the concept of stable mobility for understanding:

- the stable work that maintains mobility processes.
- the processes of mobilization that maintain stability.
- the significance of 'flexibility' in the maintenance of a stable and mobile situation.

This chapter outlines the literatures that shape the concept of stable mobility and its application to understanding the mobility processes at work in the place of Kelly Miller Circus. I begin by addressing gaps in mobility and geographic literatures' use and understandings of stability, maintenance, and mobile perspectives which, I argue, may be due to the rejection of the postmodern nomad metaphor. I discuss the potential of the idea of a nomadic lifestyle, not metaphor, to foster a mobile perspective when conducting mobility research. Following this, I highlight where mobility and general social science literature provide support for the concept of stable mobility and the restoration of the mobile perspective and lifestyle of a nomadic subject. In the case of Kelly Miller Circus, a society comparable to a nomadic lifestyle, particular elements of nomadic research are shown to offer an understanding of stability of place through mobility. I go on to develop the concept of stable mobility as it works in an American circus through the performance theory of 'restored behaviour' (Pearson and Shanks 2001; Schechner 1985) and memory theory which highlights the role of forgetfulness

(Nora 1989; Roach 1996a). I argue that these literatures can work to ‘correct’ blind spots in mobility literature to a mobile perspective in research as well as contributing to discussions of the experience of everyday mobilities. I also discuss the treatment of American circus in academic and non-academic literature as it is connected to this project. Finally, I outline the significance of the concept of stable mobility and this project set in the American circus to mobility research and cultural geography.

Mobility research, a muddy field

I would state at the beginning that mobility research is far-reaching within the social sciences broadly and Geography specifically from migration studies (Silvey 2004), to law (Blomley 1994; Cresswell 2006b), transport (Auge 1995; Merriman 2007), materialities (Law 2007; Sheller and Urry 2006), globalization (Cunningham and Heyman 2004; Verstraete 2002), and culture and identity (Tolia-Kelly 2006). Many of these research strands are part of distinct research trajectories outside of the umbrella of mobility research (Merriman 2007, p5). The direction of mobility research in the social sciences and Geography has been outlined in two particular discussions; Cresswell’s ‘mobility turn’ (Cresswell 2006a) and Urry’s ‘new mobilities paradigm’ (Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2007). It follows that there are a variety of approaches and aims for mobility research. However, the increasing amount of social science and geographic research done under the banner of ‘mobility’ seems to follow on from Cresswell’s trajectory of research and Urry’s paradigm. These two discussions have slightly different motives. Brief descriptions of both motives illustrate a common concern for highlighting movement that is quite frequently hidden or ignored. Highlighting hidden

or taken-for-granted processes of mobility begins to present an understanding of how mobility can provide stability of situation.

Cresswell's description of the 'mobility turn' in social science research moves from a root-based understanding of place which sets mobility as disruptive and placeless, to a flow-based understanding of place which calls on the nomad as a metaphor for the modern/postmodern world in which mobility equals freedom and resistance, to a more nuanced look at mobility and the complex processes and power relations inherent in the production of mobility (Cresswell 2006a). The first stage is called a sedentarist metaphysics perspective (a term which he borrows from Liisa Malkki's 1992 anthropological work with refugees) in which culture and place are understood through a humanist perspective that the presence and cultivation of stationary roots and boundaries are necessary for the production of place, and so to be mobile is to have no roots and thus no place (Cresswell 2001c; Cresswell 2004; Malkki 1992). The next turn is to a nomadic metaphysics in which the ability to move ceaselessly is perceived to mimic the modern world and create a type of freedom from, and resistance to, state power (Cresswell 1997). The final turn at present tries to attend to the inherent problems of the root and nomad metaphors by attending to context and discussing the inevitable difference and politics in the production and practice of mobility (Cresswell 2001b).

In their attempt to extend and develop Cresswell's mobility turn Sheller and Urry set out to identify characteristics, properties, and implications of what they see as an emerging 'new mobilities' paradigm. In their eyes, "All the world seems to be on the move" (Sheller and Urry 2006). This statement sets out their approach which, at first, seemed to be concerned with large-scale international movement of people, materials, and information (Merriman 2007) with the resulting project about identifying 'mobility-systems' and documenting where and how everything is moving and coming

into contact (Urry 2008). Later, Urry develops the paradigm further as an attempt to envision the world and elements of society through movement (Urry 2007). The emphasis in the 'new mobilities paradigm' tends to be on how mobile subjects maintain connection with stationary locations while moving from point to point in ever increasing and expanding movement (Urry 2000). The inclusion of the role of materials in the investigation of mobility begins to look at the means and infrastructure of mobility, which is admittedly missing in work stemming from Cresswell's call for a politics of mobility which looks to focus on the differences between mobilities rather than the essential qualities of movement (Cresswell 2001a, p9).

In my project about stable mobility at work in Kelly Miller Circus both these approaches are helpful in understanding how mobility processes create a stability of situation. The final turn in Cresswell's trajectory speaks to attending to the difference inherent in each mobility experience, but an earlier turn is helpful as well. The nomad metaphor is highly problematic in the area of difference of experience but the ability to maintain movement despite state power and its intervention hints at stable and maintained mobility processes (Deleuze and Guattari 1986). Urry's paradigm is a bit too far reaching for my purposes here but the re-vision of societies through movement is extremely useful in the case of Kelly Miller Circus and provides a discussion that is aware of the stationary locations and materials at work in mobility processes.

It strikes me that the connective thread through the trajectory of the mobility turn and the 'new mobilities paradigm,' beyond the obvious interest in anything that moves, is the importance of the context of movement to claims about the nature of mobility (fig. 1.1). Cresswell is chiefly interested in the treatment of mobility as a disruption to some perceived or assumed norm (Cresswell 2001b, p16). Merriman highlights this understanding of mobility as a fairly common treatment. "Modern western societies appear to function and gain life through the movements of all kinds of

material and immaterial things, but they are punctuated by sedentary assumptions and belief...mobilities which are deemed unnecessary, subversive or pointless are frequently criticized and controlled by a range of authorities and commentators” (Cresswell 2001c; Merriman 2007, p5-6; Sibley 1995).



Figure 1.1: Greenville, PA on July 27. The context of movement refers to the space in which the movement takes place and its effects on mobility processes. This muddy field in Greenville forced Kelly Miller to perform on concrete which changed the performances.

Investigations of the figure of the homeless (Cloke et al.

2003; Cresswell 2001c), migrant workers (Mitchell 2001), the human body (Cresswell 2006c; Sheller 2004), transport systems (Merriman 2007), travellers (Vanderbeck 2005), and EU borders and migrants in general (Silvey 2004; Verstraete 2001) highlight this tendency to privilege one movement over another. Increasing research on the everyday or more common privileged mobilities, such as businessmen, tourists, etc., present mobility processes as transformative of society and self (D'Andrea 2006; Graham and Thrift 2007; Urry 2007) as well as mundane, in the form of the daily commute and use of automobiles (Beckmann 2001; Featherstone 2004; Urry 2004).²

“Mobility is a kind of blank space that stands as an alternative to place, boundedness, foundations and stability” (Cresswell 2006a, p2). I initially approached the mobility of the circus with this assumption and was left frustrated when the mobile place did not seem to fit completely with the ‘disruption’ model from the perspective of the circus but instead presented hints of the mundane. This, I believe, reflects the starting point for most current mobility research which is an assumption that movement

² Refer to Appendix 2, Data Index, for Supplementary Sources consulted.

is, in fact, an inevitable part of place, a fact of life, ubiquitous and vital (Adey 2010, p1,4; Massey 1994). All the world is indeed on the move. Mobility is a fact of human life regardless of gender, economic status, nationality, etc. (Cresswell 2006b; Urry 2000). However, in advocating for mobility to be seen as a process of stability through maintenance I do not wish to discount the disruptive quality of mobility. As we see in Chapter 6, disruption is a useful tool for maintaining mobility processes. I want to highlight what I see as a blind spot in mobility literature: a blind spot that I believe stems from mobility researchers wanting to distance themselves from the nomadic metaphor which I believe results in a move away from the nomad's mobile perspective.

It seems odd that a mobile perspective is rare in mobility research especially as it is continually noted that "one isn't mobile with oneself and others...the world must be mobile too," (Adey 2010, p4; Urry 2000, 2007). However, like mobility itself, the ever present underbelly of daily life and a mundane reality so easy to be missed, the mobile perspective is also frequently missed. I believe this is due to an avoidance of the post-modern nomad metaphor. Let me be clear, I am not an advocate of the nomad metaphor and its attached assumptions and literatures of modernity, freedom, urban space, resisting the state and romanticising transgressive mobilities (Cresswell 1997; Merriman 2007, p5). However, I believe a mobile perspective was also lost when the idea of the nomad was dismissed as problematic (Kaplan 1996). I agree that the metaphor erased varied difference in the production and practice of mobility, but the ideas of circular beings, routine, flow, and smooth space (Braidotti 1994; Deleuze and Guattari 1986) were perhaps beginning to understand maintained mobility processes as stabilizing situations of movement. The nomadic subject was dismissed before an idea of a mobile lifestyle and living experience, as well as a mobile perspective, was developed. "The nomad is subject to the disciplinary discourse which attempts to 'place' the nomadic subject blind to the fact that there is no place but the place of movement" (Cresswell

1997, p362). Embracing the idea that there is ‘no place but the place of movement’ forces a mobile perspective and highlights mobility processes that are stable. This idea of mobile processes creating a stable and recognizable place is addressed in Chapter 4. However, in my research, the mobile perspective also highlighted that continual mobility processes create a stable place, are necessary for the stability of place, and that their absence creates a disruption in situation. This is explored in Chapter 5.

To return to my sub title, ‘mobility research, a muddy field,’ as can happen when the houses of the American circus stay in one place too long, mobility research is struggling to move. It is a problem of privileging a stationary point of view. It is viewing mobility from the point through which the object of study travels. When the mobility is viewed through a mobile perspective mobility is suddenly life and work and perhaps unremarkable and ‘nothing’ (recall the opening quote of this chapter). For example, Ben Fincham’s work on bike messengers sheds light on the life/work balance and mundanity of a mobile community (Fincham 2008). In the case of Kelly Miller Circus, a mobile perspective allowed for an understanding of mobility processes that were both disruptive and mundane and perhaps even transforming. The concept of stable mobility is one that stems from the mobile perspective of an American circus presented to me in my childhood through my parents’ stories of their experiences as circus clowns. I expand on this personal connection with the circus community and its effects to the project in Chapter 2. I mention it here to highlight the role of experience and memory in the concept of stable mobility. The context of movement which informed stable mobility, Kelly Miller Circus, also informed the way in which mobility processes are approached in this research. In the next section I highlight where mobility literature (and beyond) works to ‘correct’ the stationary blind spot of mobility research. The concept of stable mobility, in the case of Kelly Miller Circus, uses processes of performance and memory to explore how the mobility of the show is maintained from

day to day. The next section also points to how these processes are used elsewhere in mobility research.

Getting down the road with Stable Mobility

Stable mobility is a concept that embraces movement but also accounts for the inevitable disruption and, as we have seen, mundanity caused by a relatively constant state of movement. It is an understanding of movement as a continuing situation but also that the constant movement must be maintained in order to create stability within the situation. Stable mobility is not a situation of complete flux or stasis. It recognizes that flexibility in processes of mobility are necessary for the continuing condition of movement. Kelly Miller Circus is not only a culture of mobility, but also one of performance. The performance element of the place cannot be ignored while investigating its processes of mobility. Including performance in the investigation of mobility also presents a way to understand the constant renewal of mobility processes through memory work.

Discussions of automobility speak to the stability in identity (Edensor 2004) and the self-reproducing nature of mobility processes (Urry 2004). A characteristic of the nomad metaphor is the ability to improvise in the process of moving as seen in Deleuze and Guattari's opportunistic nomadic space (Cresswell 1997, p364; Deleuze and Guattari 1986) and De Certeau's pedestrian tactics (De Certeau 1984). De Certeau's tactics also present a way to understand the transformation power of continuous processes of movement. As I discussed earlier and again in Chapter 6, a circus is a place of constant change and the ever present practice of improvisation is a way of dealing with the change while maintaining a recognizable place and routine. It also presents a way for the circus to minutely transform its processes to account for the different locations in which it performs.

With claims that the world is becoming increasingly mobile the focus tends to be large scale international movements and faceless travellers (Binnie et al. 2007) that are somewhat reminiscent of the nomad metaphor with similar criticisms of mobility fetishism and erasing difference (Canzler et al. 2008; Merriman 2007). However, the ceaseless movement of the 'new mobilities paradigm' led to the investigation of the 'immobilities and moorings' and 'fluidities and stabilities' that produce such movement in an attempt to account for difference as well as document mobility systems and processes (Adey 2006; Canzler et al. 2008; Divall and Revill 2005; Hannam et al. 2006; Kaufmann and Montulet 2008; Normark 2006; Revill 2007; Urry 2003). This work highlights the role of stationary points, like airports, auto services, and website portals, to the production and management of mobility networks and processes. Doreen Massey's 'global sense of place' recognized that mobility and fluidity are a key part in the production of a relatively stable sense of place (Massey 1994). 'Relatively' stable because while users might recognize the same place, each have a different sense of its character. In the search for the use of mobility to produce a sense of stability in a mobile place I found work on community and identity to be surprisingly useful for developing the concept of stable mobility.³

Work on musicians and music enthusiasts found that mobility in the form of tours and gatherings creates a stability of community through a shared experience and expectation of travel as well as creating a recognizable place that moves location (Becker 1963; Gardner 2004). In addition, O'Reilly and Crutcher show second-line parades in New Orleans to produce and reaffirm a stability of community identity (O'Reilly and Crutcher 2006). This particular piece takes it one step further by showing the parade itself to be a relatively stable entity while moving through the streets of the

³ I would note that Traveller/Gypsy research was consulted (Drakakis-Smith A 2007; Holloway S L 2005; Sigona N 2005; Vanderbeck R M 2005) but I found it to be overwhelmingly about the perceptions and reactions to these mobile groups as 'other' with little attention to the attempt to create stability by the Traveller/Gypsy. Notable exemptions would be Hetherington K 2000 and Shubin S 2010.

city. By moving with the parade O'Reilly and Crutcher reveal a place of movement in which the paraders exist in a relatively stable place (at least for the duration of the parade) and the spectators appear a faceless, moving blur. It may not be their primary intent but this piece is an example of how a mobile perspective can open up an understanding of movement creating stability even as it creates a disruption, in this case the closing of streets for a parade. This piece in particular also begins to address the stage on which mobility is performed and its effects on the processes of mobility (Edensor 2007). This is a relationship discussed in Chapter 5.

Privileging movement can also uncover the potential mundaneness and even stillness of mobility (Binnie et al. 2007; Bissell 2009; Fincham 2007; Symes 2007) which also, surprisingly, highlights the inevitable disruption that comes with movement but also how it is managed in order to maintain mobility systems. "...mundaneity is always potentially otherwise, slipping out of kilter, disrupted and rent asunder through unforeseen occurrences and unfamiliar conjunctions...the competence to fold the seemingly unusual back into the usual once again reveals how mobilities are formed in and through habit and unreflexive modes of performance...an improvisatory disposition that forms the practical competence to adapt to change" (Binnie et al. 2007, p167-168). The amount of routine and everyday work, frequently understood as mundane (Wolff 1993, p231), that is required to maintain the mobile Traveller lifestyle was a surprise to Hetherington in his discussion of New Age Travellers (Hetherington 2000, p84). Much of this work was about maintaining and repairing the vehicles and materials of the lifestyle as well as the performances of identity. This highlights the creation of a stable stage for mobility that accounts for and utilizes disruption and transformation (Merriman et al. 2008; Sheller 2007). These small improvisations in mobility performances create stability while restoring and renewing mobility performances.

As we see in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, the element of renewal and restoration through improvisation is a key characteristic of the stable mobility concept. Along with understanding the practices and performances of mobility as stabilizing, stable mobility also attends to the disruption that frequently occurs with movement. The disruptions are managed through improvisation, or acts of maintenance, that are themselves maintained as a way to continue learning how to be mobile (Jones 2005). Improvisation in movement is a maintenance tool for the performances of mobility which produce stability in a variety of ways.

Recalling memories of movement is a frequent topic of mobility research focused on tourism (Edensor 2007; Kirtsoglou and Theodossopoulos 2004; Nicholson 2002; Quinn 2007) and migrant memories (Tolia-Kelly 2006; Wilding 2007). Occasionally it is also addressed as a tool for restoring mobility performances (Adamczyk 2002; Hoelscher 2003; Urry 2007, p266-270). In Chapter 6, I examine how a lived memory and selective remembering restores the mobility performances of Kelly Miller Circus daily. Utilizing concepts of performance and memory in the investigation of the stable work that maintains mobility in a circus allows for an understanding of mobility as lived relations between people, materials, and memory that can be disruptive, mundane, and slightly transformative. In the next section I flesh out the performance and memory theories that are utilized in the production of stable mobility in Kelly Miller Circus.

Practicing Stable Mobility

It is argued that a circus continual moves for a variety of reasons. Economics and avoiding problems with local authority are two theories put forward (Carmeli 1987;

Truzzi 1968). Another is that they are somehow obligated to just keep moving (Feiler 1995; Fetterman 1972). For me, one inescapable reason for the constant movement is to find an audience for its performance. The movement from location to location is a performance of mobility as is the performance under the tent. Looking at 'staged' performances of mobility has a small presence in mobility research (Brayshay 2005; Cresswell 2006c; Gardner 2004). The element of performance in mobility becomes more significant when approaching mobility in a performance community. The particular performance theory I engage in this project is Schechner's theory of performance as restored behaviour or twice-behaved behaviour (Schechner 1985). This particular approach to performance is reliant on the ability to recall behaviours in order to restore them. The memory aspect of stable mobility not only investigates how mobility is recalled and restored but also reflects the case of a circus, particularly in the form of storytelling which is a key means of training and transmitting memory in the American circus (Davis 2002; Feiler 1995; Fetterman 1972; Fox and Parkinson 1969; Frega 2001).

I discuss Schechner's theory of performance as restored behaviour and its relevance both in investigating the staged performance and everyday life of Kelly Miller Circus in more detail below. One particularly interesting aspect to emerged from my use of the idea of restored behaviour is how the theory evokes the ordinary and mundane qualities and practices of stable mobility in Kelly Miller Circus and more generally. The ordinary and the mundane has, in fact, been a long-standing theme in social science research, and is a context from which Schechner's work emerges. A key text in this literature is the work of Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) and related work on symbolic interactionism. In addition, the method and focus of my engagement with stable mobility in Kelly Miller Circus (an in-depth participatory ethnography of a mobile workplace and their repeated routines)

draws parallels with Harold Garfinkel's ethnomethodology. Outlining this work allows me to focus on its contribution to Schechner's work, yet also illustrates how Schechner's work on restored behaviour provides a more productive way of approaching stable mobility in the context of an American circus.

Goffman worked on the small scale, concentrating on the most mundane and ordinary social contacts in everyday life. His goal was to highlight elementary processes underpinning social life and the maintenance of orderly interaction (Goffman 2005; Manning 2008). *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* offered a dramaturgical perspective and argued that all interactions could be understood as performances before an audience. Goffman viewed everyday mundane encounters and singular encounters as actors and audiences cued by repeated pre-established patterns of actions or particular stages (p15). Through this perspective social order, or 'scripts' arise due to a working consensus between actors and audience. Goffman makes the point that the use of terms like 'actors,' 'audience,' 'front,' 'back,' and 'mask' are merely metaphors for understanding how social interactions of all variety work to maintain and re-establish a recognizable order (p246). However, by applying a dramaturgical perspective to the mundane and ordinary everyday life, he suggests the possibility for investigating the processes through which the ordinary and mundane get performed.

Goffman's work on social interactionism, specifically the idea of 'strips of experience,' a raw batch of experience one wishes to use as a starting point in analysis, is frequently cited by Schechner as a starting point to his own theory of restored behaviour (Schechner 1985, 2003). While Goffman views this strip as a function of sociological analysis, Schechner goes further with his 'strip of behaviour' which is a mechanism for performance (Carlson 2004, p46-47). Goffman is often used to discuss the performance quality of everyday life due to his use of performance terminology and metaphors to understand social order and interaction. For Goffman, the dramaturgical

terminology is an attempt to present everyday life in a way to be analysed not necessarily an argument for the inherent performativity of social interaction (Armstrong 2003; Goffman 1959, p246; Manning 2008). A key factor for Goffman in the structure of social interaction is the maintenance of a single definition of situation or pre-established pattern of action which unfolds when 'played' by the same actors to the same audience on different occasions in the face of a multitude of potential disruptions (Goffman 1959, p246; 2005). This single definition, although not necessarily static, does not seem to offer much flexibility to interactions over time and repetition.

The influence of Goffman on Schechner's work continues with Goffman's 'keying' and its connection to the idea of restored behaviour. For Goffman, 'keying' emphasizes how interactions or 'strips of experience' transform through a recontextualization into something with a different meaning, for example in a playful re-doing of a child's 'make-believe' (Carlson 2004, p46). 'Keying' refers to the transformation itself while 'restored behaviour' emphasizes the process of repetition and the awareness that some 'original' behaviour is slightly transformed at each restoration (Schechner 1985). While Goffman's work is a direct influence on Schechner and his theory of performance as restored behaviour, the building-up of social interaction and order through everyday, 'taken-for-granted' patterns and routines is also the starting point for Harold Garfinkel's ethnomethodology.

Garfinkel cites the work of Alfred Schutz and interpretive sociology (among others) as an influence for addressing the 'reflexive practices' in which a member of society makes familiar, commonplace activities of everyday life recognizable 'as familiar, commonplace activities' by being aware that on each occasion the set account of activities is used as recognized as 'another first time' (Garfinkel 1967, p9). For Schutz the meaning of social relationship events are meanings and determinations of events "that were intended on previous occasions and that may be again intended in

identical fashion as an indefinite number of future occasions” (Garfinkel 1967, p56). Where Goffman emphasizes the improvisatory nature of social interaction much less, Garfinkel goes straight to the question of how an individual knows how to ‘make sense of’ and ‘act on’ daily situations in order to maintain or re-establish a recognizable social order when it is disrupted (Garfinkel 1967; Rawls 2008; Samra-Fredericks and Bargiela-Chiappini 2008).

Garfinkel’s ethnomethodology, a term which refers to the methods of the researched, not the researcher (Laurier 2007), has the potential to illuminate how daily routines and patterns of continually movement and performance are maintained. However, I find it lacking in the particular case of Kelly Miller Circus. The ‘patterned and instructable ways in which order properties of situated action are made public and mutually recognizable objects’ by members based on the situation at hand is Garfinkel’s main concern (Rawls 2008, p704). For Garfinkel, the ‘how’ of maintaining social order through disruption is through shared understandings of a moral order and a shared trust in members of that order (Garfinkel 1967; Samra-Fredericks and Bargiela-Chiappini 2008). Garfinkel’s interest in embodied activity and the everyday practical co-production of member behaviour through motivations of trust and moral order are applicable to Kelly Miller’s continued maintenance of a mobile situation and, unlike Goffman, he emphasizes that interactions are never exactly the same twice.

Where I find Garfinkel lacking in the case of Kelly Miller is on the point of instruction. While sequential order and details are shown to hold and provide cues to instruct what should happen next (Rawls 2008, p706), the element of memory, individual, communal, or even improvised, which was shown to be a large part of the experience and maintenance of Kelly Miller’s movement and performance through the course of the ethnography, is lost. Garfinkel’s ethnomethodology and Goffman’s symbolic interactionism both offer potential for the investigation of stable mobility but

in the case of Kelly Miller Circus neither approach seems suited to the experience of the ethnography.

Where Schechner's 'restored behaviour' theory differs from these similar investigations is the priority of performance. Where others use performance terms and metaphors to illustrate how social orders, patterns, and activities of everyday life can be analyzed, Schechner approaches repeated patterns and social orders as mechanisms for creating performance. However, Schechner's 'restored behaviour' argues that no restoration is ever identical, but always slightly, but significantly, changed by the act of restoration. This speaks to improvisations in the restoration process. This thesis will discuss, repeatedly, the important role improvisation plays in the maintenance and restoration of Kelly Miller's daily routines and performances.

Each of the theorists discussed above acknowledge the presence of improvisation in the mundane everyday and maintenance of social order. Goffman's interest is in the maintenance of situation despite disruptions and recognizes that transformations of experience can occur through his concept of 'keying.' He also describes how the orderly flow of normal interaction is disrupted by an incident, some breach of social or cultural norms, and sets into motion a 'corrective interchange' (Goffman 2005). Schutz argued that 'actors' of the social world navigate the world through the use of 'recipe knowledge' in which "clear and distinct experiences are intermingled with vague conjectures; suppositions and prejudices cross with well-proven evidences...are strung together without a clear understanding of their real connections" in a pragmatic way (Carlson 2004, p44; Schutz 1967). This refers to patterns of social performances which are constantly constructed, negotiated, and reformed out of scraps of 'recipe knowledge' much like the idea of 'bricolage' (Carlson 2004). And finally, Garfinkel sought out instances of disruption which forced

individuals or social groups to employ methods mutual understood to regain a recognizable situation (Garfinkel 1967).

While each of these theories acknowledge the presence of disruption and related improvisation in the creation of social order through repetitive action, I find Schechner's theory more applicable to the case of Kelly Miller Circus in a very particular way. No performance can ever be restored in exactly the same way as it was done before. However, the attempt to restore it as precisely as possible or just enough to reference an 'original' depends on the constant disruption and related improvisation within the restoration. The work of Schutz, Garfinkel, and Goffman show that the routine, or everyday, when investigated closely, is not so routine but ordered due to the constant repetition. They are also aware of the need for improvisation in the work of that repetition. However, they seem to argue that social order and everyday routines work to resist and minimize disruption (Laurier and Philo 2006). In this thesis I argue that it is the constant disruption that comes with each restoration due to the ever-changing circumstances that maintain recognizable patterns of performance of mobility.

In the case of Kelly Miller Circus, the effects of continual disruption are minimized. However, the presence of continual disruption is not resisted, but folded into the individual and group memory in order to assist in the continual restoration of routine and performance. The theory of restored behaviour presents not only a way to understand how a pattern of everyday activities builds up a recognizably stable situation over time, but also a way to understand how continual disruption can also work to stabilize a recognizable routine of everyday and staged performances. In addition, as I will discuss below, it also incorporates memory work into the restoration process.

Addressing the mobility of an American circus through performance and memory reflects the case of the circus as well as extending the ways in which mobility is approached in the literature. I believe understanding the way performance and

memory work in a mobile place can help ‘correct’ the lack of mobile perspective in mobility research. The work of performance and memory in the continuation of a circus’ daily movement also gets at the nuances of the stable mobility concept which distinguishes it as a different way to approach and understand mobility processes. In this section I discuss the particular performance and memory theories I engage in this project and their connection to the concept of stable mobility and the case of the American circus.

Restored Behaviour



Figure 1.2: Basking Ridge, NJ on June 15.

Photo by Peter Erceg.

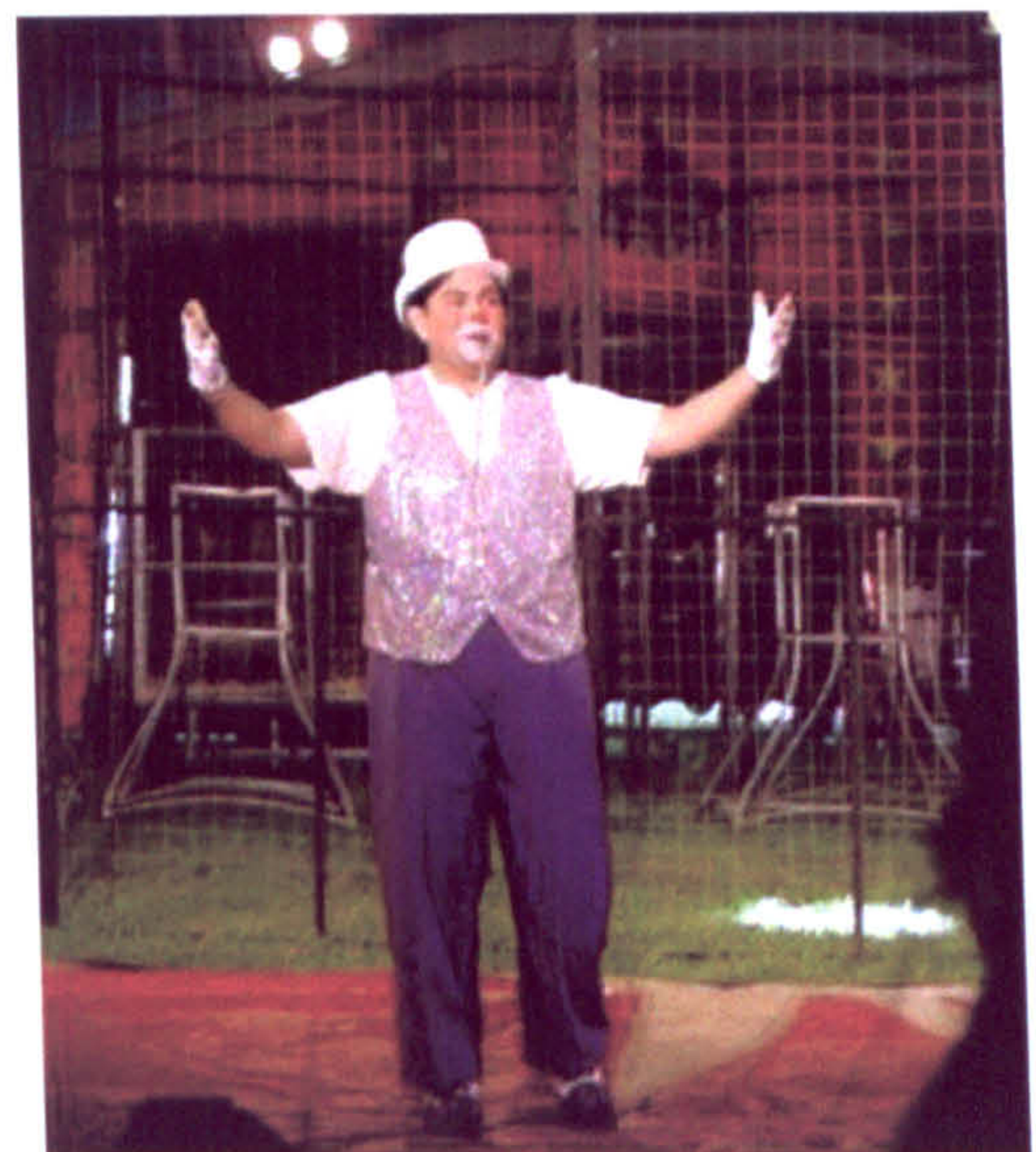


Figure 1.3: Camden, NY on July 14. The restored behaviour of the clown is altered by costume, audience participation, and weather.

The relatively stable and mobile work of the circus is maintaining a mobile performance. Due to the nature of circus life and performance, which occur in varying outdoor locations, the daily movement and related activities of continual set up and **teardown** must surely be integrated into the ring as well as the daily life of the circus.⁴ Just as ‘mobility’ and what it means remains unspecified and is used in many cases for

⁴ I am aware that many performances travel frequently and the idea of a mobile performance is not necessarily specific to the circus. However, the circus in which I set my study, Kelly Miller Circus, differs from other mobile performances in an important way. It is an almost completely self sufficient entity in that it carries with it, housing, power, food, performance space, office, mechanic, school, etc. on its daily travel. It relies on its host location for water and waste disposal although it can also supply these for itself if necessary (see Chapter 3 for a more thorough discussion of the characteristics and history of the circus in America and Kelly Miller Circus in particular).

many arguments (Cresswell 2006a, p2), 'performance' is essentially a contested concept which lends itself to numerous understandings and approaches (Carlson 2004, p4, 80). In the social sciences in particular, performance is a confusing and contested concept (Gregson and Rose 2000). Geographers tend to approach performance through one of two theorists, the labour and social relations of Erving Goffman, or the linguistic and 'natural' performances of Judith Butler's performativity (Butler 1995; Gregson and Rose 2000; Pratt 2000a).⁵ Erving Goffman's approach seems to lend itself more readily than Butler to geographical research through his ideas of 'front' and 'back' interactions and 'settings' of social interaction (Goffman 1959). It is also useful to some mobility investigations for the watching of people's movements (Urry 2007, p40) and the performance of service (Crang 1994). Despite the usefulness of Goffman for geographic approaches to performance, I found Schechner's theory of performance as restored behaviour more illuminating for stable mobility (fig. 1.2, 1.3). Briefly, restored behaviour is "living behaviour treated as a film director treats a strip of film. These strips of behaviour can be rearranged or reconstructed; they are independent of the causal systems that brought them into existence...originating as a process, used in the process of rehearsal to make a new process," (Schechner 1985, p35). A discussion of this theory highlights why I engage this theory in the project of stable mobility in a circus.

Restored behaviour is a concept created and nourished through discussions with anthropologist Victor Turner and sociologist Erving Goffman and draws on personal performance experience (Carlson 2004; Schechner 2003). It is most commonly used in performance studies but its social science influences make it accessible to other disciplines of history and anthropology in the investigation of historical and cultural

⁵ Both these approaches have been used in geography to investigate different cases of performance in: *work* (Crang P 1994; Gregson N and Rose G 2000; McDowell L and Court G 1994), *political agendas* (Gibson C 1998; Houston D and Pulido L 2002; Revill G 2000), *identities* (Lewis C and Pile S 1996; Longhurst R 2000), and *research*, (Dewsbury J-D 2000; Nash C 2000; Thrift N and Dewsbury J-D 2000) to list a few.

performances and ritual (Pearson and Shanks 2001; Roach 1996a). This is the first reason for my choice. It is an understanding of performance, created to understand performance, that is informed by a performance perspective in discussions with social sciences. It is surprising to me that it is not frequently used in geographic investigations of performance, a particular exception being Bosco's work on the memory and political performances of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Bosco 2004). Restored behaviour is an approach that incorporates life; the sights, smells, sounds, and emotions of everyday. It attends to the senses and participation of both researcher and researched and the production of the performance, an aspect frequently lost in performance work (Gregson and Rose 2000, p447).

My second reason for using restored behaviour is its applicability to 'everyday' performances as well. "The everydayness of everyday life is precisely its familiarity, its being built from known bits of behaviour rearranged and shaped in order to suit specific circumstances" (Schechner 2003, p23). Schechner's theory echoes the way mundane mobilities create familiarity through improvisation. My third reason stems from this idea of familiarity through repetition and change. An element of repetition is present in both Goffman's and Butler's approaches to performance and, indeed, in most approaches to performance. Performance is "...always involved with a sense of doubleness of the repetition of some pattern of action or mode of being in the world already in existence," (Carlson 2004, p80). Finally, I embraced the theory of restored behaviour because of its use of memory (of the mind or muscle) to restore performances. The process of restorations is extended to materials of memory through the work of Pearson and Shanks and their discussion of the links between performance and archaeology (Pearson and Shanks 2001; Pearson and Thomas 1994). Restored behaviour attends to the preparation of performance as well as the performance itself

which is something missing from research about circus performances, which I discuss later in the chapter.

Restored behaviour provides a way to understand a continual situation of mobility that is mundane, but it also offers a way to understand the presence of disruption and transformation in mobility processes. No action, or set of actions, may be performed exactly the same way twice; they must be reinvented or recreated at each appearance (Schechner 2003). “To perform, in this sense, means to bring forth, to make manifest and to transmit. To perform also means...to reinvent,” (Roach 1995, pxi). Restored behaviour is ‘out there,’ distant from ‘me,’ behaving as someone else, as I am told, or as I have learned (Schechner 1985, p36; 2003, p28). This is because behaviours can be stored, transmitted, manipulated, and transformed. As separate strips of behaviour they can be worked on and changed but will still be recognizable as a particular behaviour. Recognizable because there is an ‘original,’ or authentic, behaviour honoured through restored behaviour although the original is usually lost or distorted through myth and tradition (p.28). However, inevitably it is not the original behaviour recalled but the most recent through recollections of ‘how did I used to do it,’ (Schechner 1985, p52). Restored behaviour is also symbolic and reflexive, its meanings enacted and decoded by those in the know (Schechner 1985). In this way it is possible for the restored behaviour, in some cases, to meld its presumptive past and present cultural context and be recognized as ‘tradition’ (p.65) which in turn might be understood as the original, or authentic, performance.

The act of recalling or restoring a behaviour understood to be traditional cues a discussion about memory and how it is passed and implemented in performance. In the next section I discuss how memory works in restored behaviour. I then discuss how restored behaviour and memory work to produce stable mobility in Kelly Miller Circus and ‘correct’ the mobile perspective blind spot in mobility literature.

“We are one of those forgotten groups of society...I don’t mind being forgotten by the government. The people that come haven’t forgotten. There is a difference there.”

Scott O’Donnell, Interview, Circus World Museum, September 3, 2004

Restored behaviours of mobility require the ability to restore or recall previous behaviours. How these behaviours are recalled and restored is crucial to how they are repeated. Everyday mobility is informed by memories of mobility performances and also depend upon artefacts backgrounded into the skills of everyday mobility (cars, buses, maps, phones, signs, signals, etc.). In discussions of performance and memory, the materials of mobility offer information about how the performances are restored. In many cases, the artefacts are all that remain of the behaviour. They are traces of earlier performances and the interpretation of those traces directs the performance (Pearson and Shanks 2001). ‘Traces’ can be anything from scars, to photos, a bit of costume, a hand drawn map, a script, a sound or smell, a shared anecdote or memory (fig. 1.4). In a sense, they are repositories of performances waiting to be restored. These traces, the remnants of performances that came before, work to recreate performances in the present and may also be repositories of memory. “Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images and objects” (Nora 1989, p9). The memories recalled through a trace in the work of



Figure 1.4: Greenville, PA on July 27. The forgetful performance of spotting a truck that routinely gets stuck in a muddy field is preserved through this trace of the truck’s tire.

performance are dependent upon the individual or group doing the restoration. “Thus the traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel” (Benjamin 1992, p92). In this way, the behaviours are slightly transformed at each restoration which is also a disruption of the ‘original’ behaviour.

The active production of memory through monuments, museums, etc. and the subjectivity of such memory production is a common theme in memory research in Geography.⁶ The research I highlight here touches on the way memory, connected to traces, is implemented to restore a performance of some kind. These pieces use memory materials but also attend to the inevitable disruption which occurs when using memory to restore a performance. For example, DeLyser’s work on the Ramona stories and related tourist landscape highlight the different ways the Ramona myth is restored depending on the materials consulted (DeLyser 2003, 2004). DeSilvey directly addresses the inevitable questions of disruption that arise when using materials to restore a historical performance in her discussion of the bits and pieces of a homestead (DeSilvey 2007). The use of materials to restore a personal performance of movement is touched on by Tolia-Kelly in her look at how migrants create an attachment to home through household items (Tolia-Kelly 2006). All these pieces touch on the flip side of memory that is forgetting and its effect on the restoration of a performance. When discussing memory one cannot ignore forgetting as it is not the other of memory, but an interlinked process of remembering (Legg 2007).

Recall Scott O’Donnell’s comment on being a forgotten group of society. He goes on to say that the people that come to the circus have not forgotten. He is aware that there is an element of selective forgetting surrounding the circus community in America. On a daily basis, the circus is forgotten by the audience, but on ‘circus day’ the circus is remembered and restored. This is a kind of ‘present memory’ in which

⁶ Bosco F J 2004; Connerton P 1989; DeLyser D 2003; DeLyser D 2004; Dwyer O J 2000; Fenster T 2004; Forest B, Johnson J and Till K E 2004; Hoelscher S 2003; Hoelscher S and Alderman D H 2004; Le Goff J 1992; Marshall D 2004; Till K E 2005.

activities are remembered and enacted in the present and promptly forgotten, or better yet, filed away until needed again. However, Scott is not discussing his memory of the circus which, it could be assumed, is a much more present memory in that it is used daily. The temporary nature of circus memory of the audience presents the circus as fleeting and ephemeral (Davis 2002, p36). I am interested in how the memory of the circus about itself is engaged daily in the performances in and out of the ring. I believe that this working of memory presents a way to understand how stable mobility is produced in Kelly Miller Circus.

“Memory is life...it remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived,” (Nora 1989, p8). Accumulated memories are the basis for skills and modes of behaviour, and what we choose to remember and forget allows us to learn from past experiences (Bergson in Legg 2007, p458). An understanding of memory that is aware of the disruption and instruction that comes from the process of remembering and forgetting, or filtering, enhances Schechner’s restored behaviour and leads to a discussion of the role of improvisation to the continuation of memory, and in turn, performances of mobility.

Improvisation

Viewing performance and memory through restoration and forgetting is to view them as continually moving forward and changing but also maintaining a recognizable situation. In order for memory to be lived and present in our lives, in order for it to be stable, it must be gone over and over through time (Nora 1989, p12). Recall that stable mobility is a continuing mobile situation inevitably changing in response to disruption, while maintaining the movement and a recognizable place of Kelly Miller Circus.

Roach's treatment of performance (leading on from Schechner) intertwined with memory speaks not only to maintenance in the moment but also to continuation. "Like performance, memory operates as both quotation and invention, an improvisation on borrowed themes, with claims on the future as well as the past" (Roach 1996a, p33).

In the renewal of performance through traces, a rupture or a sudden unexpected change in direction, emphasis, or rhythm may occur. These 'ruptures' serve as a refocusing for the performance (Pearson and Shanks 2001, p27). It is the evidence of a change. The performance cannot go on as before but it will continue and the rupture will be visible and apparent. The memory of the rupture colours the performance. As Chapters 4 and 6 discuss, the people of Kelly Miller are always aware of the weather and its effects on their ability to perform in the ring as well as to perform their daily drive. They routinely alter their daily performances to account for weather conditions. An unexpected thunderstorm presents a rupture to the performance in that a new altered routine will have to be created for this day and situation, but the performance of both the ring and the drive will go on. "The fissure between experience and recall is one that is filled with creativity," (Huyssen in Legg 2007, p457). That creativity can also be understood as improvisation. Through traces and ruptures, the bodily habits and materials of life can be understood to hold memories. They are also open to evolution and manipulation in the project of maintaining performances (Legg 2007; Roach 1995). "Improvisation introduces a space for play within memory itself," (Roach 1996b, p222). Maintaining a performance while allowing for manipulation and transformation reveals a continuation element to memory work while also preserving the past and present.

Improvisation is rarely discussed directly in mobility research or Cultural Geography but the discussion of how performances change to fit circumstances is present in research dealing with performances of work (Crang 1994) and political protests (Bosco 2004; Houston and Pulido 2002). In his investigation of service work,

Crang notes how his 'script' of service would continually change depending on table and customers but would still be recognizable as the initial script with the same eventual outcome of a meal delivered, eaten, and paid for (Crang 1994). The script changed but the performance is recognized as a version of the performance that came before that also informed this particular restoration of service. Traces and memories set the stage for current and future performances which are similar but never quite the same.

Vladimir's comment, at the start of the chapter, claims that the "movement is nothing." This dismissal of a necessary behaviour, "it is what you have to do," perhaps reveals the necessary forgetting that comes with each restoration of behaviour. It would seem that every performance is an act of memory which necessarily enacts forgetting (Roach 1996a). While it may not be remembered specifically, the trace of driving is visible in every performance as discussed in Chapter 4. If forgetting is a process of remembering, and so also a process of restoring behaviour, perhaps the circus 'forgets' in order to keep driving. But, as in Scott's comment above, it is not a complete erasure of memory but a filing away to be recalled when the need arrives. At which point the trace of driving will inform the performance of driving.

In work on mobile research methods it is noted that there is a difficulty accessing discussion and memory of movement which leads to a stationary view of mobility processes.⁷ Addressing mobility through memory in the form of traces of mobility performance can perhaps force attention to why it is that movement is forgotten and in this way 'get at' the movement despite forgetfulness and perhaps restore a mobile perspective to mobility research. In Chapters 4 and 5, I discuss how the traces of mobility performances, as well as the performances themselves, create a stable and mobile place known as Kelly Miller Circus. Investigating mobility through memory allows for a deeper appreciation of the complex processes of movement and

⁷ It was the topic of a conference I attending at Cardiff University on 12 June 2007, "Developing Mobile Methods."

their ability to create a stable situation. Memory and performance can also present “an alternative form of knowledge—bodily knowledge, habit, custom,” (Roach 1995) which speaks to way of understanding mobility as stable through the way mobility is learned and transmitted which is discussed in Chapter 2, 5, and 6. Approaching processes of mobility through concepts of performance and memory can extend and challenge mobility research by highlighting a mobile perspective and embracing the idea of disruption, or rupture, as a maintenance tool for mobility processes (Frandsen and Vilhelmson 2010). Locating mobility research in the mobile performance community of a circus also contributes to cultural geographic investigations into mobile communities (D'Andrea 2006; Laurier et al. 2008). Approaching the performance community of the American circus through the concept of stable mobility also extends and challenges circus research and its approach to performance and memory in the community.

Stable Mobility and the Circus

The trend of circus literature mirrors a trend in performance studies in which “theorists tend to place more emphasis upon the audience or upon the community in which performance occurs,” (Carlson 2004, p35). Academic engagements with the circus are overwhelmingly concerned with its performances and its meaning for the audiences.⁸ There are discussions and descriptions of performing and the work that goes into creating a performance in more popular forms of literature (Feiler 1995) and increasingly in online diaries by circus performers,⁹ but in academia they are more of a methodological note, (Carmeli 1991a). One notable exception is a piece by Ron Beadle

⁸ Bouissac P 1976; Bouissac P 1981; Bouissac P 1990; Burke H 2006; Carlyon D 2002; Carmeli Y S 1987; Carmeli Y S 1991b; Carmeli Y S 2001; Carmeli Y S 2003; Davis J M 2002; Holland W 1999; Little K 1995; Mosier J L 1999; Stoddart H 2000.

⁹ Refer to Appendix 2 for specific online diaries consulted during this project.

and David Konyot looking at the decision making process of a ringmaster in and out of the ring (Beadle and Konyot 2006). The majority of academic research on the circus is set in European circuses which have similar, yet distinctly different, modes of presentation and travel (Stoddart 2000) which inevitably shape the ways in which the two traditions are approached in research. The distinct tradition and history of American circus and Kelly Miller Circus are discussed briefly in Chapter 3.

Approaching the circus through mobility performances directs the research beyond the performance in the ring and the experience of the audience. But the performances in the ring are not ignored as they are the driving force of the mobility performances (fig. 1.5). Stable mobility's use of restored behaviour recovers performance but also ensures that the work of the performance is not lost. The preparations to move and perform are



Figure 1.5: Lima, NY on July 17. A view from inside the tent reminds the audience and performers of the mobile nature of circus performance.

considered as much a part of the performance of mobility as the drive and ring performances themselves. Restored behaviour introduces the work of memory to performances through the use of traces which are susceptible to interpretation and re-living (Pearson and Shanks 2001, p6). The traces of behaviour in the circus are particularly vulnerable to interpretation as there is no text attached to these performances as there normally is with theatrical performances. These performances are 'passed down' through physical training and storytelling (Davis 2002; Fox and Parkinson 1969; Frega 2001). The same can also be said of the everyday performances of mobility. There is no text to teach one how to perform and live in the circus (Feiler

1995). It is something transmitted through practice and belief without the help of writing (Roach 1996b, p221). This mode of behaviour restoration through memory reflects a lived memory full of forgetfulness and selective recall.

Many works concerning the American circus begin with the statement that a definitive history of this event or person or particular circus is not available and what is available is clouded in myth.¹⁰ This fluidity of memory is criticized (Carlyon 2001; O'Nan 2000; Stoddart 2000) and celebrated (Davis 2002; Fox and Parkinson 1969; Frega 2001). However the fluidity of memory, the nonchalant attitude toward archiving that memory (discussed in Chapters 2 and 3), and the almost blatant disregard at attempts to disprove memory by the people living and working in the circus, illustrates that "collective memory is a narrative that excludes rival interpretations and is haunted by the potential to remember differently or to refuse to forget," (Legg 2007, p459). Through processes of performance and memory the circus teaches itself how to move and how to maintain their movement from town to town through improvisation, or acts of maintenance. This treatment of the circus extends circus research beyond the performance in the ring and in doing so extends the understanding of circus beyond its metaphor of chaos and freedom. Similarly, the case of the circus extends mobility research through its use of performance and memory to understand differing modes of mobility production.

Approaching Stable Mobility

In this chapter I highlighted the importance of the context of movement to mobility studies. Not just in the choosing of mobile subjects to study but also how

¹⁰ Carlyon D 2001; Dahlinger F and Thayer S 1998; Davis J M 2002; Feiler B 1995; Fenner M S and Fenner W eds 1970; Frega D 2001; O'Nan S 2000; Stoddart H 2000; Wilkins C 1998.

those subjects are approached in the execution of mobility research. I argued that the gaps in mobility literature around ideas of stability, maintenance, and a mobile perspective are 'blind spots' perhaps connected to an attempt to create distance from nomadic metaphors and theories that have proved problematic. However, I also pointed to where mobility research, and social science literature more broadly, is attending to elements of stability within mobility, the maintenance of mobility creating a recognizable place of mobility, and the enacting of mobile perspectives which can highlight the mundancity and inevitable disruptions of mobile situations, through discussions of the use of stationary points, mundane routines, and materials of mobility systems.

I argued for the consideration of the mobile subject and movement context when approaching mobility research. Investigating the production of mobility in Kelly Miller Circus through performance and memory reveals new ways to understand the production of mobility which can 'correct' the blind spot of a stationary perspective which tends to present mobility processes as either disruptive, transformative, or mundane. The performance theory of restored behaviour reveals the constant reworking of mobility behaviour that attends to the inevitable disruptions of movement while also maintaining that movement. This understanding of performance introduces memory as a tool in the production of mobility which utilizes improvisation to deal with the disruption of movement while also providing lessons on how to maintain movement. In this way, the concept of stable mobility, through the context of an American circus, presents an approach to mobility that embraces and utilizes disruption, transformation, and mundaneness to understand how mobility processes are maintained while also maintaining a mobile place. Stable mobility contributes to the current trend of attending to difference in the production and experiences of mobility (Cresswell 2001b) and re-

viewing society through mobility (Urry 2008) without necessarily taking on the assumptions of either approach.

The concept of stable mobility, inspired by the circus, argues for a view of mobility that recognizes the necessity of mobile performances in the production of mobility as well as the necessity of disruption in order to maintain the recognizable circus. It also argues for a flexibility in both these processes which allows for mobile places, such as the circus, to be affected by the locations through which they move but not be tied to them in the production of their movement. As Chapters 4, 5, and 6 illustrate, Kelly Miller Circus is affected by each town through which it moves and the roads on which it travels but it is not dependant on the specific towns or roads, but the disruptions they cause, in order to produce its stable mobility performance. The following chapter discusses the methods engaged in the research of stable mobility performances in Kelly Miller Circus. It focuses on the development and execution of an 'ethnographic ride-along' which attempted to engage the concept of stable mobility methodologically in order to mirror the theoretical concept of restored behaviour and a lived and present memory.

Chapter 2

An Ethnography of Stable Mobility: On the road with the Kelly Miller

Circus

“Knowledge of such memories [bodily knowledge, habit, custom] comes more readily to the observer-participant, who has danced the dance or joined the procession, than it does to the reader” (Roach 1995, p48).

Stable mobility is a concept that privileges a mobile perspective. It is an attempt to engage with the experience and production of movement within mobility research. This is a research engagement that is largely missing from mobility research (Fincham 2007; Symes 2007). In this project, the concept of stable mobility is investigated in the place of Kelly Miller Circus. To attend to the particular processes of mobility of the circus, the project’s guiding questions incorporate theories of performance and memory into the investigation of stable mobility in a circus. Approaching mobility research through theories of performance and memory also enriches the concept of stable mobility and extending the possibilities of mobility research by highlighting the practice of improvisation. The research questions of the project guide the theoretical and methodological engagements with the concept of stable mobility. The guiding questions demonstrate the value of the concept of stable mobility for understanding :

- the stable work that maintains mobility processes.
- the processes of mobilization that maintain stability.
- the significance of ‘flexibility’ in the maintenance of a stable and mobile situation.

These questions tease out the nuances of the stable mobility concept in the case of a circus, as well as highlighting the way in which stable mobility is used as a conceptual and methodological approach. The concept of stable mobility, coupled with the performance theory of restored behaviour (Schechner 1985) and an understanding of memory as life (Nora 1989), argues for an understanding of mobility and stability as intertwined. Not fixed or fluid, but in a recognizable flux. These three conceptual building blocks speak to maintenance and continuation of situation through constant reworking and improvisation. I discuss later in this chapter how ‘maintenance through reworking and improvisation’ became an unexpected, yet helpful, theme in my research method and analysis.

In this chapter I first discuss my ‘ethnographic ride-along’ method and how it evolved in conversation with my research themes and circumstances of fieldwork. I discuss the experience of the ethnographic fieldwork highlighting the way I maintained my research plan through reworking and improvisation. This is followed by a description of my fieldwork preparation and additional research undertaken at stationary locations related to the American circus. I then reflect on the ethical questions which arose during the ethnography, many of which stemmed from my outsider/insider position. In this section I also reflect on the benefits and pitfalls of my chosen method which leads to a discussion of analysis and presentation of research. Finally I conclude with some thoughts about the performance of research in the field and its effects on the project.

Choosing ethnography

With an increasing interest in mobile methods in an attempt to ‘get at’ the movement of mobility research (Ricketts Hein et al. 2008; Ross et al. 2009), and in light of my chosen case study which is notoriously close-knit and suspicious (Feiler 1995; Little 1995; Wilkins 1998), I thought the best way to observe, learn, experience, and document the stable ‘work’ of a travelling circus was through participant observation, specifically an ethnography of a working and travelling circus in America. Over the course of fieldwork it became more of a transformation and immersion method which reflected aspects of the stable mobility concept. Here I discuss why I chose an ethnographic method followed by a description of the experience of the method. I reflect on the benefits and pitfalls later in the chapter.

Participant observation is generally recognized as a way to get as close to a spatial phenomenon as possible (Laurier 2003) by choosing to work and/or live within a community to understand how they work from the inside (Cook 2005). The circus is a way of life and a livelihood and participant observation is used extensively to get at the detail of the workplace in a way that cannot be accessed through interviews and focus groups alone (Becker 1963; Crang 1994; Fincham 2006; McDowell and Court 1994; Tope et al. 2005). *Ethnography* is commonly understood as an umbrella method holding within it, participant observation, interviewing, focus groups, and visual approaches among other creative methods of data gathering (Cook and Crang 1995). An ethnography tends to be distinguished by a heightened degree of participation and observation and the kind of data produced, for example detailed notes about research and daily activities (Emerson et al. 1995). Ethnography is also distinguished by the inevitable ‘loss of control’ and contingencies which the work can take (Cook and Crang

1995). This understanding of ethnography, helpfully for me, harnesses the reworking and improvisation highlighted by the concept of stable mobility.

Mobility research in the social sciences is increasingly interested in mobile methods in an attempt to recover movement so easily lost in 'static' interviews (Ricketts Hein et al. 2008; Ross 2007). These include walking interviews (Emmel and Clark 2007; Hall 2009), dashboard cameras (Laurier 2007; Laurier et al. 2008), go-alongs (Kusenbach 2006), as well as participant observation on trains (Bissell 2009; Symes 2007) and bikes (Fincham 2006). It should also be noted that many of these methods are utilized outside mobile research as well. By calling my method an ethnographic ride-along I place it within increasing discussions of how to do mobile research as well as attending to the everyday life performance of driving in the circus (Kusenbach in Madison 2005; Ricketts Hein et al. 2008, p1275-1276).

In the ethnography I intended to observe and participate in the working circus and use myself as an experiment for learning to perform mobility (Longhurst et al. 2008; Watson and Till 2010, p122) in order to understand the role of 'traces' in the performance of mobility in the circus. I did not wish for the resulting research product to be a diary of experience but I hoped that my process of learning and related experiences would be illuminating to the process of how stable mobility worked, and is maintained, in a circus (Butz 2010; Pearson 2006). To engage the materials of mobility and performance I planned to conduct what I called 'prop interviews.' This is a form of interview that focuses on the stories attached to materials and traces instead of the interviewee directly. It was created by combining methods of biography writing (Frega 2001) and diary or photograph based interviews (Latham 2003; Mason and Davies 2009) with the aim of conducting an interview that would produce narratives and not seem too personal or intrusive (Watson and Till 2010, p123). I expand on this particular method later in the chapter. I also planned to document the rhythm of each day through

photographs, video, and diagrams to get a sense of routine and how multiple routines overlapped and interlocked to put on the show.

The circus season in the United States runs from approximately March through October. In 2008, from March 1st to August 6th, I worked and lived with Kelly Miller Circus for just over half their season. At the time of negotiating access, I chose to not stay an entire season due to a prior commitment at an international conference and the end of the circus season overlapping with the beginning of the academic year. I reflect on this decision and its effects on the research later in the chapter. I initially wanted to take as minor a role as possible within the circus with the aim of being a part of the show but without too many responsibilities so as not to create too much disruption to the community (Del Casino Jr. 2001) and ensure I had time to conduct my research as planned. Early in the ethnography it became clear that I would have to alter my plan of research while also learning how to live and work on the move. This was the kind of moment of reworking I wanted to experience in the ethnography but nonetheless it caused a great deal of anxiety. However, as the next section details, this reworking put me in the path of data that I doubt I would have recovered through my initial plan and addressed my questions about stable mobility in the circus in ways I did not expect but that proved very exciting. The following section relates the narrative of the ethnographic portion of this project by highlighting four distinct reworkings of my research plan and the resulting data and experience.

Learning to move: The ethnographic ride along

I want to introduce a tension that runs throughout this project and that was in constant negotiation during fieldwork and writing. When I ‘entered the field’ of Kelly

Miller Circus, I was not exactly doing ‘insider’ research but I had more than a casual interest in the community. My parents’ were circus clowns for a combined period of about 3 to 4 years. This relatively short period of their life made a lasting impression. Their experiences permeated our family life through stories of daily life and language references (the latter became more apparent through this project). My prior knowledge assisted, to some extent, in the preparation for a life on the road. However, regardless of the knowledge passed through my family, I was not prepared for the actual experience of living and working in a motorhome in rain, mud, extreme heat, and strong winds. I reflect on this tension, which I refer to as *blood vs. experience*, later in the chapter, as well as the benefits and repercussions of this outsider/insider status to the project.

I mark the beginning of the ‘ride along’ at my acquisition of a motorhome. When the owner of Kelly Miller Circus accepted my proposal to join his show he mentioned that I would need to find my own trailer. After consulting with the show’s **Transportation Manager**, I decided on a 1985, 26 foot, *Coachman Leprechaun*-complete with bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, central heating and cooling, and a generator for power. This would be my home, transportation, and office for the next five months.

I named it Seamus (this is a family tradition which spread to a few other houses on the show). I designated the living room area for my office and posted my research questions in plain sight on the overhead



Figure 2.1: Middleboro, MA on June 26. Seamus completely unpacked.

storage compartments (fig. 2.1, 2.2). In my parents’ experience, their vehicle broke

down frequently so my father prepared a maintenance kit of sorts. I also prepared for the inevitable mud and bought a tow strap, hard plastic covering to protect the carpet, and collected a selection of wooden boards to provide traction.



Figure 2.2: Winterquarters in Hugo, OK. Inside Seamus, note the questions posted on overhead cabinets. The sheets hanging over the windows were advice of another winterquarters resident to keep the cold out.

I thought these might also be useful for levelling the motorhome in the chance that the lots were not ‘flat.’

In preparing the internal living space my mother gave me a set of sheets and a large old kitchen knife that have always been in our home. For me, the sheets recalled memories of summer camp; for my mother, her circus trailer. I have no particular memories of the knife, however I did find it significant that it was passed on to be used in another circus kitchen. In addition, she posted a series of pictures of their circus experience in the kitchen (my father writing in their circus trailer, my mother cooking in the trailer, the trailer itself, the trailer packed up, and miscellaneous photos of them in costume around different lots). The traces of mobility performance were already working on my personal performance through second-hand memories, experience, and materials. On February 27th, in the worst snowstorm of the year in northeast Ohio, I began the three day drive to Hugo, Oklahoma and Kelly Miller Circus **winterquarters**.

In those three days I quickly learned the limited capabilities of my new home in terms of speed and the intricacies of manoeuvring it on the road and in and out of petrol stations. I spent those nights in hotel rooms. This was later revealed as a smart choice.

I joined Kelly Miller Circus in its winterquarters two weeks before **opening day** (fig. 2.3). Practically, I wanted to give myself time to learn how to live in the motorhome without having to drive everyday as well. In terms of research, I thought the two weeks would allow me to observe the circus prepare for the season as well as assist in that preparation as a way to introduce myself. I also hoped this would present an opportunity to observe acts rehearse and how they were put together to make the **running order** for the

season. I planned to spend these first weeks ‘**learning the ropes**’ of circus life as well as identifying key people for interviews and examples of mobility performances which spoke to stability.



Figure 2.3: Kelly Miller Circus winterquarters in Hugo, OK on November 6, 2007.

On my arrival to winterquarters I was directed to a parking spot and began setting up my home for the first time. Seamus promptly sprung a leak in a water hose flooding portions of the interior. I quickly became acquainted with the local (40 miles away) repair shop and visited them twice more before the start of the season on the 15th of March. During my two weeks in winterquarters I was given the job of spray-painting seating barrier frames. Instead of meeting people and introducing myself and my research, I was in a cold metal barn meeting people sporadically as they moved in and out fetching materials for other projects. Sometimes I had help, which is how I initially met the Drummer and Transportation Manager (our prior conversation happened over the phone). Our conversations touched on my history and my project, although the bulk

of our conversations were about the water problems I was experiencing in Seamus and similar problems they had experienced.

As opening day drew closer, I was increasingly frustrated by my inability to insert myself into the preparation or communication chain. When I attempted to watch the first rehearsals, I overheard the comment, “What is she doing here?” and was sent to pick up a truck 40 miles away. While this meant I missed potential data on the performance production, at the time I felt it was more important to prove myself willing to work for the show.

The day before opening I moved from winterquarters to the lot in town (fig. 2.4). I was able to watch a rehearsal, introduce myself around, and enjoy lunch in the **cookhouse** with other members of the show. I received a very quick training on ticket selling (my assigned job for the season) and assured that this job would take very little time out of my day leaving plenty for my ‘research.’ My anxiety eased a bit. That evening would see the first of many changes to my research plan when my job was suddenly changed. I was immediately dropped into the centre of the show, or so it seemed to me at the time, and would be required to spend a considerable greater amount of time working for the show.

I was approached at dinner in the cookhouse. The

person hired to run the music for the show was not “up to the job” and someone was needed that could run the computer playlist and recognize performance cues. In the barn, I had mentioned that I have theatre background in an attempt to create some



Figure 2.4: Opening day in Hugo, OK on March 15. Note the cookhouse located behind Seamus and the tent secured to the flatbed truck.

common ground. They referred to this, and asked that I step into the job. I was hesitant. It would mean a significant amount of time spent away from my research but I also saw it as another opportunity to prove myself committed to the show. This job would put me in direct contact with more members of the show which I thought would prove more beneficial to my research. Currently, I was on the fringe and even though it had only been two weeks I did not hold much hope that the job of ticket seller would improve this position. I accepted and spent that night with the **Ringmaster**, Drummer, Tiger Trainer and his wife, the Dog Trainer, learning the music cues for the next day.

The change in job was coupled with a very obvious moment of gatekeeping, but also with the suspicion that usually comes with research, particularly with an ethnographic method (Cook 2005, p174). During that evening I was confronted directly by the Tiger Trainer about my intentions and supposed circus history (which I had mentioned to the owner in my research proposal with the aim of appearing sympathetic). It seemed many members of the show were convinced I was an animal activist and had created a fictitious circus background to get on the show. He quizzed me on my parents' experience. Their circus experience is limited, but due to the obscurity of the shows they worked on, he accepted my story as true saying that no one would know about those circuses unless they worked on them. He offered me a drink and this began a significant research activity, the swapping and telling of stories, that would occur fairly regularly for the rest of the season. The next day, I made minimal mistakes during the show. The second day I assisted with the teardown of the **backdoor** curtain. I ran the music for the next four months and was responsible for the backdoor teardown until I left. I did not realize it at the time, but these two accidental jobs were the first of many reworkings of my research plan which would direct the research questions and the collection of data (Cook and Crang 1995; Del Casino Jr. 2001).

In winterquarters I created a 'research bag' which held a small notebook, pocket sized digital camera with video capability, pens and pencils, a voice recorder and consent forms in three languages. I planned to keep this with me at all times so that I would be prepared to 'catch' data as it happened throughout the day. In those first two weeks I catalogued the data for the day and updated my research journal every evening. When the season began I quickly learned that between driving, setting up, the shows, taking care of household chores, and packing down, there was little time left over in the day. It took about a week before I could arrive at the lot in the morning and not immediately go back to sleep. I found the schedule of waking at 05:00 and driving for two hours very exhausting. Driving the motorhome, while watching for route markers in the dark, sometimes foggy or rainy mornings, was quite stressful at first. I reworked my research plan to be more conducive to the life I was living. During the fieldwork I went through four distinct changes to the research plan which were directly related to circumstances in the field and which built on the earlier plans. In this way I restored research behaviours like a performance. I refer to these plans as research/life routines.

Two weeks into the season, four weeks into the fieldwork, I was finally comfortable with the driving but was stressed every morning as I arrived at the lot. I was repeatedly parked on the edge of the space with the owner's empty motorhome, my 200 ft power cord just out of reach of the electricity box. I knew that the difficult parking was part of paying my dues, but at times it became so ridiculous that it hampered my job. Eventually the Tiger Trainer, Ringmaster and Lot Supervisor made attempts to stop the hazing. By the end of my first month on the road I had semi-regular spotting within reach of electricity and settled into my first research/life routine. This first routine was in action from about the third week of the season to the end of May.

First research/life routine

The research bag was quickly abandoned. It simply was not practical. Aimlessly wandering around taking photographs and notes allowed me to get an initial feel for the **layout** and major timings of the days. However, the notes tended to lack context because I was viewing a finished product and not the work due to my morning nap and the continual inclement weather. The first 10 weeks of the season were filled with heavy rain that made the lots mazes of muddy ruts (fig. 2.5). Once the initial work of set up was completed everyone disappeared into their living space. I spent a lot of time in those weeks staring out my windows hoping to see something and writing about my frustration with the weather and isolation. It did not feel a promising start to the fieldwork.

As the weather slowly improved, I began to fit into the daily routine in order to understand the context of the work done in the morning. There were flurries of activity and pauses throughout the day. I became aware that



Figure 2.5: Avella, PA on May 19. Standing water inside the tent was common at the start of the season.

these periods of multiple activities were relatively the same each morning but also specific to the particular lot on which the show was parked. The performances and drives blurred together despite my best efforts to record notable moments, like a missing **arrow** on the route or a slight change in the performance. However each lot was distinctive in my memory. I believe this is because the lot determined changes in spotting and layout which affects daily routine and performance. I began to record data that took into account the context of the day and location, i.e. the drive, weather,

crowds, condition of lot, layout, etc. as well as personal activities. I had purchased a large desk calendar to keep track of practical details; when I dumped my waste tanks, money spent on gas, and phone call appointments. I found myself recording research data on this calendar as well as brief notations about the day in general; “frustrating,” “fog,” “MUD”, etc. (fig. 2.6). I later discovered that the road office used a similar method to keep track of daily business. I also began organizing my notebook entries by the town, instead of the date.

These methods developed organically in response to my experience and reflected the altered routines of the day as well as connections between days. This was a way of recording the context of mobility processes in a way that recovered the

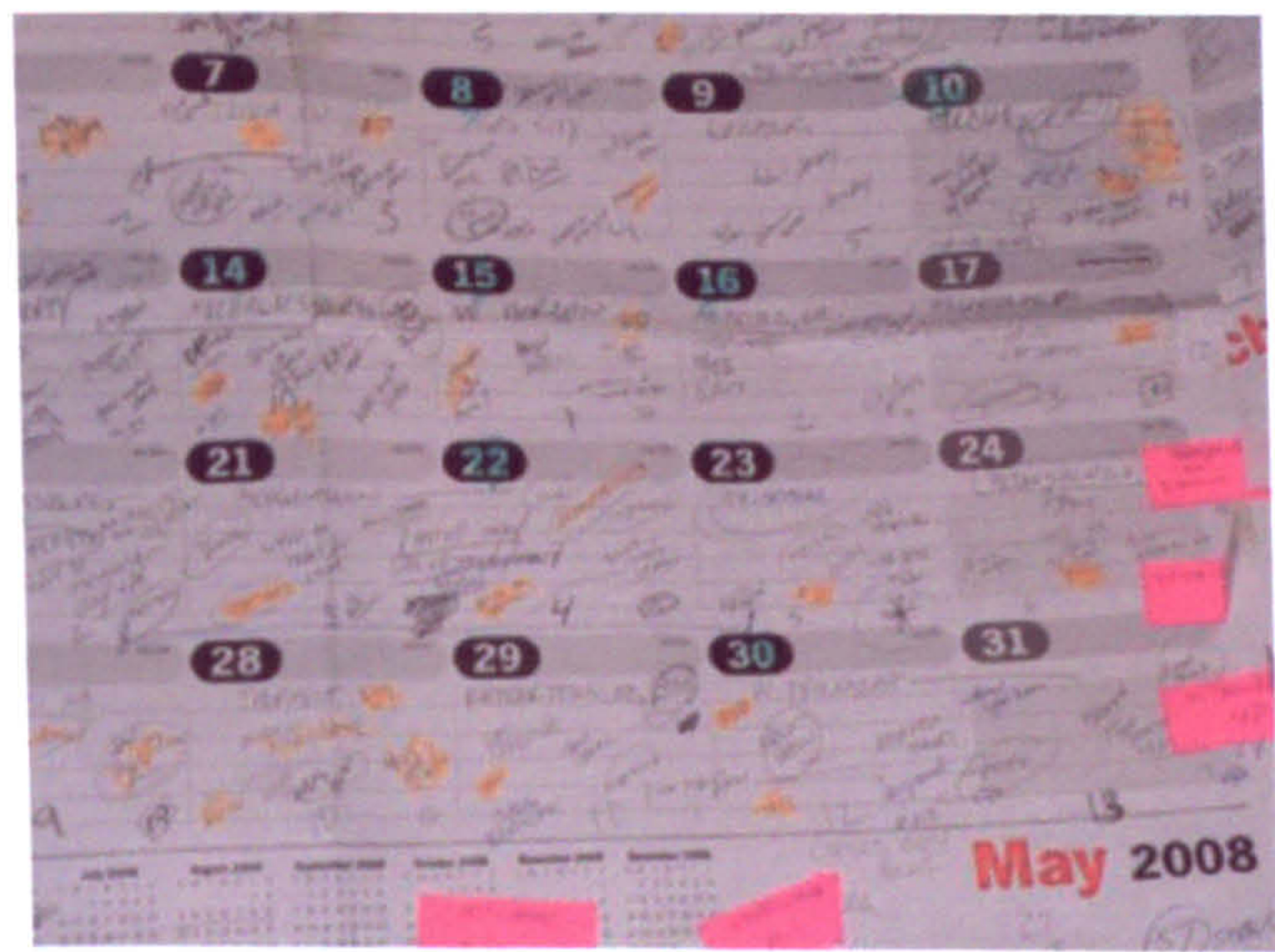


Figure 2.6: Example of calendar fieldnotes. Green numbers indicate ‘research days.’

recognizable flexibility of Kelly Miller’s daily routines and performances. The calendars prove invaluable in filling in holes in notebooks and providing context for particular performances. In addition to the calendar, I began to take photographs that showed the changes to routine as well as the stability of routine. For example, I tried to take a photograph of the **midway** everyday to show how it remained relatively the same while the surrounding lot changed daily. These two research practices persisted through all four research/life routines.

The life of the circus was exhausting for me. I attempted to jump immediately into research and the lifestyle from the first day of the season. I was driving, napping, ‘observing,’ writing, working, tearing down, writing, sleeping and driving again. I was so concentrated on documenting the more obvious performances of circus life, like

setting up and the show, that I rarely interacted with the people around me or the everyday details of life. Eventually I crashed and on one weekend evening, which is a sort of 'time off' and socializing opportunity, I was sitting in Seamus writing about my isolation and frustration. I realized I had to learn how to do this circus life before I attempted to comment on it or I would miss the point of the project.

I gradually created the first research/life routine that was made up of 'living' days and 'research' days. A living day was just that, I was living and interacting and participating. A research day was actively going about gathering data through photographs, videos, questions, notes, etc. On these days I would play on my 'newness' to gain information about activities and hopefully gain information with which to start an interview dialogue. During this routine I had 30 'official' research days. On living days I tried not to think about what I should be doing in terms of research, although I would still usually record 'interesting' events, fill in the calendar, and create a lot diagram (Watson and Till 2010, p127). These days were valuable to the project as context for the moments selected as significant in the writing up performance.

On arrival at a new lot, after parking and levelling Seamus, I would make notes about the drive on the route slip. I initially recorded voice memos while driving, but soon gave that up as impractical. I rarely had time to transcribe the memos, the recordings were very poor due to engine sounds, and it was perhaps a bit dangerous. There is a lot of activity during morning set up and it is impossible to be everywhere at once. I would concentrate on a different element of morning set up each time I observed this activity for research. At times I tried to blend in with the observing crowds to take photographs and video unnoticed by the tent crew because they always played to my camera. This was rarely successful. At some point during the day I created a diagram of the lot with, it turns out, varying detail (fig. 2.7). By 11:00 the activities of the morning set up were accomplished and, after lunch in the cookhouse,

for about three hours the lot was relatively still. In these hours I ran errands with other circus members (such as

grocery shopping, laundry,

going to the library for

internet access, or purchasing

supplies for motorhome

maintenance), take a nap, or

catch up on my notebooks if it

was a research day. This was

really the only time for

research activities such as

interviews and writing. Once the shows began there was no time for anything beyond

work, making dinner, and packing down. I would attempt to make some notes about

this portion of the day in the evening before I went to sleep.

During the shows I sat on the **bandstand** behind the ring and ran the music. I

had a small ‘show’ notebook

but there was rarely an

opportunity to write

anything down due to time (I

had a cue about every three

minutes or less) or weather

conditions (when it rained I

squeezed into the covered

portion of the bandstand

next to the drum set with the

computer on my lap). After the show I packed down the bandstand and the backdoor

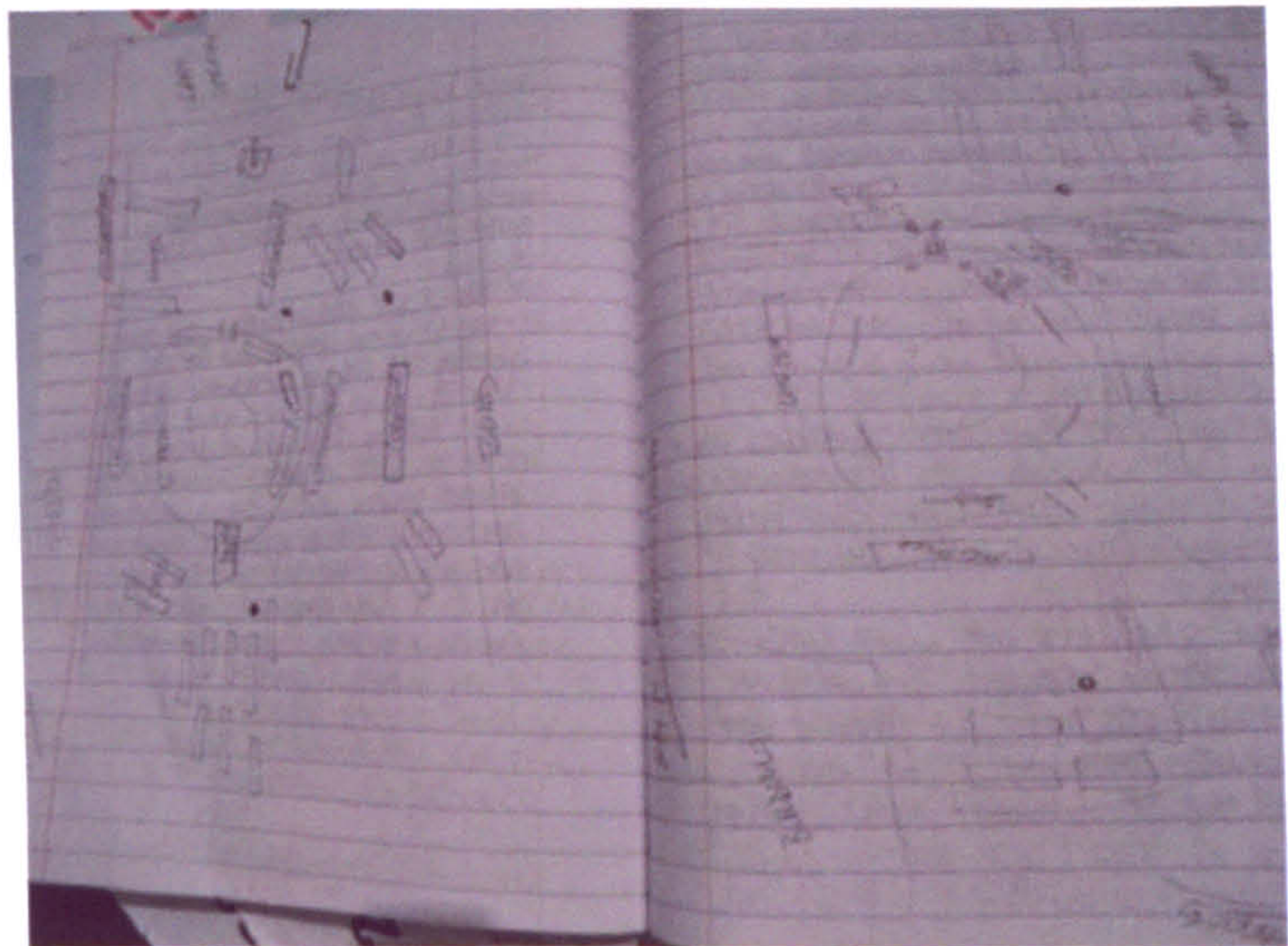


Figure 2.7: Lot diagrams of West Liberty, OH on May 13 and Mechanicsburg, OH on May 14.



Figure 2.8: Basking Ridge, NJ on June 16. Acknowledging the band while the ring mat is dragged out for the elephant act.

Photo by Peter Erceg.

curtain (fig. 2.8, 2.9). During this time I could usually have a conversation with the Transportation Manager about his day and what was waiting for us tomorrow. These conversations proved very useful both practically and for research. The evenings were set aside for relaxing, socializing, after occasionally driving to an adjacent parking lot, or, rarely, to the next day's lot. In this initial period a relatively small amount of 'hard' data was collected but the experiences of this period were very helpful to the creation of Chapters 4 and 5.

All my research activities during this time had the aim of documenting the routine of the show at large. During this period my research notebooks quickly became a place for personal reflection about my journey and learning curve as well as frustration about my ability to learn how to live the circus life and conduct research at the same time.



Figure 2.9: Spencer, MA on June 22. Folding the backdoor curtain.

Photo by Peter Erceg.

The distinction between 'research' and 'living' days did not work as well as I hoped. On 'research days' I was sometimes at a loss as to what to focus on that day. On the days I set aside as 'living,' I felt the research questions prominently posted in my living room were mocking me. On reflection this usually occurred in conjunction with 'bad' weather days stuck in Seamus, which were quite frequent. It was on one such day that my second research/life routine began.

Second research/life routine

On May 22nd in Morgantown, WV after being stuck on a cold and muddy mountain top for three days, I tore down the questions, in a fit of frustration, and threw the pieces out the door of Seamus, proclaiming to myself that I needed a break. I then

went outside and gathered the pieces up, as the show has a strict litter policy, and returned them to a file folder. During this second routine I focused on my aerial training, which began early in the season but was not going very well, and generally being part of the social life of the show. I spent a lot of my free time with the friends I had made. With the increasingly better weather we enjoyed regular morning brunches and nightly gatherings. I felt free to enjoy and participate in the stories, advice, and complaints shared in those gatherings. It was at one particular brunch that the title of the thesis was uttered in complaint. These social moments were valuable 'data' about how one learns to 'live' circus. I continued recording daily detail on the calendar, making lot diagrams, keeping an account of my training, and various quotes and comments, but was no longer taking photographs or video regularly. During this period the show was experiencing areas with regular WiFi hotspots and cell phone reception and my days and interactions were recorded through emails and text messages to my partner and friends.

My partner's visit was to serve a research purpose as well as a pleasant change and proof of my marital status (a fake identity position I took up which I discuss later). Initially, he was supposed to document my participation and life through photographs and also illuminate aspects of the life that had become invisible to me through his learning of circus life. Instead he was given a job as groom to the tigers and spent a large portion of his day learning about animal training and generally assisting with the tiger act before, during, and after the show. He was not able to document my activities to any great extent. However, being put to work did illuminate a particular aspect of circus life in which everyone must contribute. His brief experience of circus life, coupled with our limited communication for the rest of the period, highlighted patterns in my behaviour for him that I had not noticed so far but which prove important to the

production of stable mobility, for example, my tendency to complain about things being ‘off’ after a **two day stand**, which I discuss in Chapter 5.

Third research/life routine

After my partner left, I adopted a new research routine around July 1st, the day after my first tire blow out. During my ‘time off’ I had allowed the circus to speak to me about my research questions. I became more interested in how mundane and show routines intertwined to direct the overall rhythm of the day instead of looking at them separately. The importance of improvisation had also become clear and I wanted to look at what caused disruption to routines and how they were addressed. Feeling more confident about what I wanted to research, I asked to be let go from my job so that I could concentrate on research activities such as interviews, observing what happened around the lot during and after the show, and writing. I had put off more formal interviews in the beginning because my initial attempts were met with the canned answers given to local reporters at the morning set up. I decided to wait until people were more comfortable with my presence. After over three months into the season, I felt my position within the show was secure enough to begin to approach people for interviews.

I trained someone to take my job on the computer, which was an illuminating exercise in the teaching of performance timing and flexibility, and began to prepare for interviews with members I had identified as key to the production of the show. I also spent time observing and documenting the activities of the lot during the show which I had previously missed due to my job (fig. 2.10). Giving up my job turned out to be something of a mistake. I was immediately spotted at the edge of the lot again and became somewhat isolated from the social fabric of the show. My friends said they did not want to bother me and interfere with my research. I was still involved with

teardown, but I was no longer thought of as part of the show and had difficulty recruiting people to interview. I believe my sudden withdraw from the show reminded people that I was not one of them and caused some people to draw away and become suspicious of my intentions despite our experiences together over the past few months.



Figure 2.10: Canajoharie, NY on July 12. The Cookhouse teardown and cat props during the beginning of the second show.

The interviews I did manage to conduct took up precious free time between set up and performance. My ‘prop interview’ method still elicited the canned answers of the earlier attempts. In these moments I was too much a part of the show and received answers to the effect of “You know this, why are you asking?” This is a not uncommon experience in insider research (Porteous in DeLyser 2001, p443), though I did not consider myself a complete insider. Descriptions prompted by objects and events were impersonal and factual. It seemed in giving up my job I was cast in a different role. The rich stories and observations of circus life that were present during social gatherings were lost to sound bites I had read in **Circus Fan** publications. I was unable to access the elaborations of the social gatherings through the interview format. However, in those gatherings many of the stories and observations stemmed from my questions or complaints and those stories and experiences were recorded in my personal communication with my partner and family as well as the calendar and research notebooks.

After conducting six semi-formal interviews and being repeatedly put off by the majority of the people I approached, I made the decision to stop pursuing the interviews. They were taking valuable free time from my interviewees which was not appreciated. I did continue to document lot activities through photographs and video as well as attempt to document moments in the ring performance which I thought highlighted moments of performance and mobility processes overlapping. For example, the crew dismantling props behind an act (fig. 2.11). I continued with informal, casual prop interviews. I would ask direct questions about timing, concession selling, costume pieces, etc. in the few moments between acts or when people were standing around socializing between morning set up activities and shows.



Figure 2.11: Peqannock, NJ on June 17. The Clown performs while an act is dismantled in the ring.

Photo by Peter Erceg.

These were recorded in shorthand in a small notebook when the moment was over away from the discussion (Crang 1994). I could frequently be found between trailers and the tent furiously writing.

Fourth research/life routine

Two weeks before my departure from the show my research/life routine changed again. I was given the opportunity to perform in the ring. In fact, I was told I could not leave without performing. My aerial training had not been successful and I had initially not wanted to perform in the ring during this research because I did not want to take someone's job. However, I was spending my last weeks on the fringe of the community

with little advancement of research and thought this would be a way of researching the performance aspect of the show directly. On July 22nd I began rehearsals. Before and after the elephant act I would mount an elephant in the **animal department**, ride to the backdoor and dismount (fig. 2.12). After the act, I did it in reverse. During these last few weeks my role changed my position in the circus and my research again. I was continually given advice on how to prepare, how to **style**, how to apply my show make-up, and which hairstyle I should use, as well as costume pieces as gifts. I was no longer left alone to ‘do’ my research. In the evening, I was told how to care for my minor injuries and stories about related experiences which served as advice and warnings. This is



Figure 2.12: Willowick, OH on July 31. Practising in the animal department.

Photo by Sara Greene.

information that I could not access prior, and recorded as soon as possible with hurried writing in notebooks and photographs. The day before my debut in the ring I spent 15 minutes running through the elephant routine in the enclosure. I would also perform in another act but was told that there was no preparation necessary beyond knowing the history of the act (which did not offer any practical advice) and that I had seen it enough times to know what to do. On August 1st I picked up my borrowed costume pieces and waited for my cue.

The day of my first performance my spotting shifted to reflect my performer status. After my first performance of each act I was given additional advice to implement in the next. Through this activity I learned first-hand how traces of

performance in the form of costume, tradition, advice, and memory worked to create a performance (fig. 2.13). Besides learning to perform in the ring, I also had to learn a new life schedule to fit around my performance which, surprisingly, gave me more time to write. When I gave up my job running the music I still organized my life activities around that schedule. Performing in the show gave me less time for research activities during the show, but more time to accomplish packing down activities which freed up time in the evening for writing.



Figure 2.13: Norwalk, OH on August 2. Mending showgirl fishnet tights in Seamus. The tights were a gift along with advice about how to repair them.

Photo by Ria TerraNova-Webb.

On the morning I left Kelly Miller Circus when the route arrow pointed right, I turned left. At that moment I felt a pang of anxiety at not following the arrow and realized what a stabilizing and comforting thing a simple route arrow is in the performance of getting down the road. In the five months of field work my movement through different roles in the circus caused me to rework my research plan, but also mirrored a tradition in the circus for individuals to play numerous roles. I gained insight into the importance of each job to the working of the show. In the last two weeks it all seemed to come together and I witnessed how memory and performance worked in, and beyond, the ring and how it was taught and utilized in the continuing project of living in the circus. Researching stable mobility through an ethnographic ride-along highlighted the importance of considering the context of movement in theory and in method. The theories of restored behaviour and living memory allowed me to

develop my methods in communication with the circumstances of the fieldwork and revealed how maintenance through reworking and improvisation worked in the place of Kelly Miller Circus. By ‘dancing the dance and joining the procession’ (see quote at start of chapter) of Kelly Miller I learned how mobility processes can be understood as disruptive, transformative, and mundane and how all these understanding work to maintain the mobility of Kelly Miller Circus. In the next section I discuss how I developed and prepared for the ethnography (beyond outfitting a motorhome). Within these discussions I also describe some additional research done at stationary locations connected to the American circus community.

Developing an ethnographic ride-along

“We must move with and engage movement within the movement”

(D'Andrea 2006, p114).

In the development of the methodological portion of this project, I wanted to find a way to enact stable mobility in my research method as well as my theoretical engagement. I also wanted to ensure a mobile perspective. According to Cresswell, mobility is a socially produced motion understood through three moments; pure motion, representation, and a way of being in the world, i.e. practices embodied (Cresswell 2006a, p3). I believe an ethnographic approach provides the best opportunity to observe, participate, and document these three moments in a mobile place like the circus. Different methodologies are technologies for seeing differently—of actually seeing differently (Pratt 2000b, p649). I wanted to see mobility differently. I wanted to force a mobile perspective in order to, in a way, test my concept of stable mobility as

well as investigate mobile methods. Here I discuss how the ethnographic ride-along developed through engagement with theoretical concepts and locations of memory for the American circus community.

Access

First, I had to find a circus willing to take on a researcher full-time. Based on my reading of circus-related academic and non-academic literature, and on the advice of my parents and their clowning partner, this did not seem an easy task. Writers' comments on the suspicious nature of the circus (Carmeli 1991a; Douglas 1991; Feiler 1995; Fetterman 1972; Little 1995; Wilkins 1998) echoed my parents' concerns. I approached my search for a potential 'case study' circus through archival research, personal experience, and gut feeling. I wished to investigate stable mobility at a lived level and to do that I wanted to place myself within a circus that travelled daily and had a set of acts that remained together for the duration of the circus season. Thus being mobile as well as made up of a stable group of people, animals, and materials. Practically, a set population would increase my chances of developing relationships with the members of the show. I also wanted a show that used a ring and performed with animals since these, along with daily travel, are the hallmarks of an American circus which I discuss in Chapter 3 (Davis 2002; Fox and Parkinson 1969; Stoddart 2000). A list of active and potential circuses was drawn from a combination of sources including community records held at the Robert L. Parkinson Circus Library and Research Center at Circus World Museum, my personal subscription to *The Circus Report* which is a community newsletter of sorts, a circus fan publication *The White Tops*, the Circus Historical Society's publication *Bandwagon*, non-academic literature and personal experience with particular circuses.¹¹

¹¹ Refer to Appendix 2, Data Index, for descriptions of additional sources consulted.

I used a combination of criteria to identify possible case studies (Table 1). I identified two possible circuses, Culpepper & Merriweather Circus and Kelly Miller Circus, as possible research sites. Through the community publications, I learned that Kelly Miller Circus was recently bought by the surviving member of the **Ringling** Family. There was a lot of interest in the consequences for Kelly Miller's long history and reputation. I thought the change in ownership and the community speculation may prove interesting in terms of living memory and performance.¹² If Kelly Miller declined my request I planned to approach Culpepper & Merriweather which had similar presence in community literature and shared a winterquarters with Kelly Miller and Carson & Barnes Circus in Hugo, Oklahoma. I wrote to Kelly Miller's new owner, John Ringling North II, on July 25, 2007, presenting my research project and request and mentioned that my parents have a circus history. I included this information to show that I had some knowledge of the community and was someone that could be trusted.

At the end of August I received an envelope with the colourful logo of Kelly Miller Circus (fig. 2.14). The letter from Mr. North accepted my offer and suggested I find a trailer as they had no accommodation to offer. As I discussed in the previous section, additional issues of access were

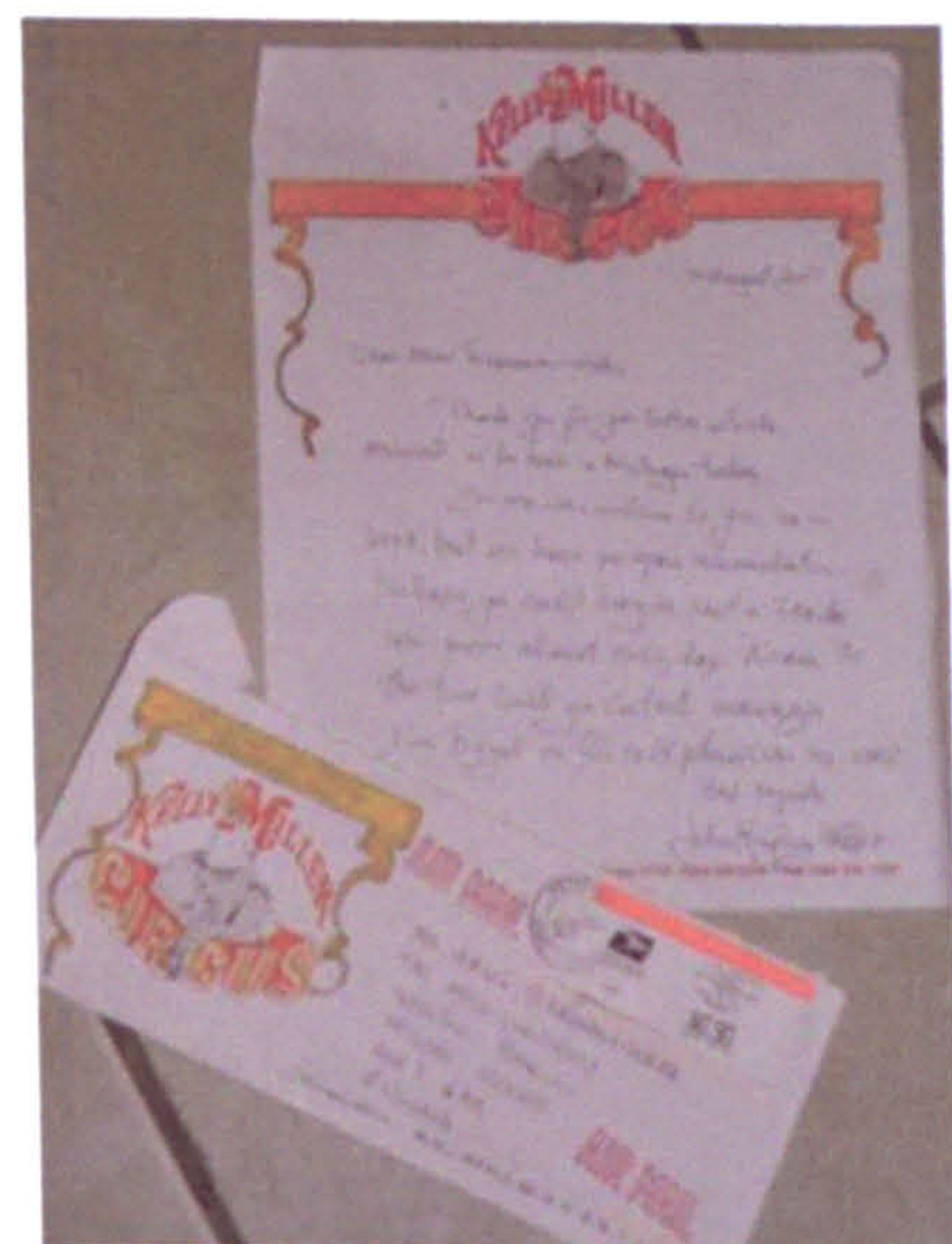


Figure 2.14: Letter from Mr. Ringling North accepting my proposal.

negotiated once I arrived at winterquarters and throughout the five months of field work. With my research 'location' confirmed for the 2008 season I set about preparing for the ethnographic ride-along.

¹² These themes are not directly addressed in this thesis but serve as a possibility for continued research in the areas of performance and memory in circus space.

Table 1: Potential Research Sites

Circus	Website / Contact info	Regular daily travel	Set acts	Ring & animals	English	In circus publications
Big Apple Circus	www.bigapplecircus.org		✓	✓	✓	✓
Carson & Barnes Circus	www.carsonbarnescircus.com	✓	✓	✓		✓
Circus Chimera	www.circuschimera.com	✓	✓	✓		Closed
Circus Smirkus	www.circussmirkus.org		✓	No animals	✓	Circus school
Circus Vargas	www.circusvargas.org	✓	✓	✓		Closed
Cirque du Soleil (numerous)	www.cirquedusoleil.com				?	✓
Clyde Beatty Circus	www.beattycircus.com	Weekly	✓	✓	✓	New tent & operations
Culpepper & Merriweather Circus	www.cmcircus.com	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kelly Miller Circus	www.kellymillercircus.com	✓	✓	✓	✓	Frequently
Pickle Family Circus			✓	Theatre	?	✓
Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey (3 units)	www.ringling.com		✓	Animals, not always ring	✓	✓
Shriner Shows (various)				✓	✓	✓
Sterling & Reid Bros		✓	✓	✓	✓	Limited

During fieldwork, I learned that there are over 40 circuses, in some form or another, touring the United States. Many only tour for a few weeks or are one-off productions. However, there are only around 15 that travel daily under a tent.

Preparation

In preparing for the ethnography I wanted to learn more about the particular circus I was joining as well as the American circus community in general. This project is not a historical one however, through visits to circus museums and casual conversations at these locations, I learned that the circus in America is a community very attached to its tradition and is actively trying to preserve it while also continuing it through the travelling shows. With this in mind I planned a pilot study/trip to three particular locations connected to the American circus community and tradition. During this trip I would also practically prepare for the ethnography by beginning the search for a trailer and conducting mock ‘prop interviews’ in order to practice my interview skills. In addition to the pilot study/trip I also continued reading about ethnographic methods in order to create a method toolbox to be used during the ethnography (Table 2).

Table 2: Method Tool Box

Method	Purpose	Used	Comments
Field notes	To record activities and reflections on research, also used as a place to 'try out' possible connections between research questions and the field experience	✓	Fieldnotes are in various forms, from notebooks of long entries to scraps with jottings. Fieldnotes were supplemented with desk calendar, route slips, road maps, and personal letters and communication
Individual ride alongs	To experience different driver's experiences with vehicles, use the drive as prop for interview.		Not practical, no one to drive my vehicle, no room in other vehicles for extra passenger, too early in the morning for most participants.
Participant diaries	To access the daily routines and concerns of particular members throughout the show, use as props in interviews.		Too time consuming, however many members run blogs which were consulted when there was internet access and throughout the writing period, occasionally these prompted questions through email.
Participant observation	To access the daily lives and work of the show.	✓	This situation proved incredibly difficult and rewarding in terms of day to day life as well as research activities.
Performance case study	To observe creation and development of a particular act in order to understand how mobility and memory are incorporated into the process.	✓	I learned acts are commonly developed the season before and so I was only able to observe how the act changed through the season and, if it was rehired, in the following season during site visits.
Prop interview	To enacting the 'trace' of performances in order to conduct less 'intrusive' interview.	✓	Overall, this method was more successful when conducted as casual conversation documented later. However, this meant documentation of the prop may be lost.
Reporter	To use the job of reporter to conduct interviews as well as learn about the particular preservation/maintenance work of the various publications.		This opportunity never really presented itself. The associations preferred their own writers or weren't interested in a 'visitor's' point of view, it also became less a part of the project as the research questions shifted in the field.
Visual material	To capture movement with video, as well as change from day to day with photographs, also serve as reminders for fieldnotes.	✓	Not always able to catch 'moments.'
Voice memos	To catch thoughts and descriptions as they are happening, particularly notes on driving, may be less intrusive than writing notes.	✓	This proved impractical when driving, bad recording due to engine sounds, needed two hands to drive and did not have microphone, was helpful in quickly documenting activities as they happened on the lot.
Workshop interview	To replicate particular activities such as creating a 'running order' or rehearsal.	✓	Used once, provided good discussion but was difficult to record all aspects, prep time and actual interview very time consuming.

I believe many of these methods are well suited to recovering movement. However, the practicalities of fieldwork hampered the execution of some methods.

During a pilot study/trip to the United States I visited The Robert L. Parkinson Circus Library and Research Center at Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin, The International Circus Hall of Fame in Peru, Indiana, and Kelly Miller Circus' winterquarters in Hugo, Oklahoma. I also hoped to make contact with writers from the Circus Fan Association which publishes *The White Tops*, and the Circus Historical Society which publishes *Bandwagon*, as well as the staff at *Circus Report* in Las Vegas, Nevada.¹³ The Circus Library and Research Center and International Hall of Fame were selected as research locations due to the use of live performance in their preservation activities which reflects my interest in the preservation of memory through daily life activities. I was interested to see if and how these fixed locations served as a kind of support network for the travelling portion of the circus community.

I went to Kelly Miller Circus winterquarters in Hugo, Oklahoma on the 6th and 7th of November 2007 to negotiate my position in the show with the General Manager, gain some basic knowledge about the practicalities of this particular show, and get some advice on purchasing a trailer. At the time of my visit the town served as winterquarters of four touring circuses, three of which would continue touring the following season. Kelly Miller Circus had returned to winterquarters a few weeks prior. I also presented my research plan to the General Manager to get his feedback about the viability of the plan in the context of Kelly Miller Circus and advice about how to approach members for their involvement in the project. He informed me that there is always a 'start of season' meeting before the first show and suggested that I introduce myself there. This would present an opportunity to introduce the project and pass out any forms. I agreed that this arrangement would allow me to be as open as possible and hopefully not surprise anyone when I started asking questions and taking photos. This meeting did not happen until May. I discuss the repercussions of this delay later in the chapter.

¹³ Please refer to Appendix 2 for a list of additional circus museums and archives.

Prop Interviews

Inspired by a circus biography, *Women of Illusion* by Donnalee Frega (Frega 2001) and social science methods of diary and photograph interviews, place reconstruction, and walk and ride-alongs (DeLyser 2004; DeSilvey 2007; Fincham 2007; Latham 2003; Mason and Davies 2009; Ricketts Hein et al. 2008) I created what I call ‘prop interviews.’ I use ‘prop’ because I planned to use actions, smells, sounds, etc. as well as materials to prompt discussion and recover ‘forgotten’ memories. I hoped this method would show how traces work in the restoration and maintenance of mobility performances in the circus. The people of the circus are used to being questioned frequently about their life which has created a kind of interview persona that is enacted when someone starts to ask questions (Wilkins 1998). I hoped this method, which could be used formally or informally, would unsettle the usual script and performance of interviews and elicit ‘stories’ more than ‘answers.’ As discussed in Chapter 1, storytelling is a tradition in the circus and a tool for maintenance and I wanted to integrate this element into the methodology (Pearson 1995, 2006).

In the mock interview I tested questions, a variety of props, recording equipment, and note taking. At the end of the interview I asked for feedback about the clarity and appropriateness of the questions, as well as the feasibility of conducting this type of interview in the social and physical space of the circus. The mock interview was scheduled with my parents and their clowning partner. On the day I conducted it with just my parents. Initially, all the answers and stories told were heard before. However, when I introduced the props the mood changed and I began to uncover new memories and stories. For example, a tin of **clown white** elicited a story about the creation of my mother’s clown face (fig. 2.15). The smell of the make-up led to a story about the smell of diesel fuel and the sound of the **stake driver**. The sensory dimension of this method was unexpected but an exciting development as another way to elicit

forgotten memories (Mason and Davies 2009; Smith 2000). Feedback on the interview process was mixed. The mode of interview was thought successful in that the props triggered memories forgotten. Considering my interest in ‘forgetfulness’ this was promising. However, there was a



Figure 2.15: Clown white tin. The smell parked a story about the smell of diesel fuel and sounds of a circus lot.

concern about consent forms. In my parents’ experience the circus was generally suspicious of new people and reluctant to sign anything beyond their contract and pay slip. They thought asking someone to sign a consent form at the start might set the wrong tone and at the end might seem ‘sneaky.’ I discuss the use of consent forms in practice later in the chapter.

I conducted the first pilot interview in Hugo, Oklahoma with the General Manager of Kelly Miller Circus at Showman’s Rest which is the circus section of the cemetery denoted by ‘weeping’ elephants and unusual tombstones (fig. 2.16). This area elicited numerous stories about the occupants and their connections to Kelly Miller Circus in particular. Many of these stories were recorded after the fact in my car and hotel room due to its unscheduled nature. As I discussed in the description of the ethnography, this would prove to be the best way to go about doing ‘prop interviews.’ I later read that my theatre and



Figure 2.16: Showman’s Rest in Hugo, OK on November 7, 2007.

performance training might prove helpful in the remembering of dialogue and interaction (Watson and Till 2010, p125).

The next three pilot interviews were conducted on the trip to the International Circus Hall of Fame in Peru, Indiana (November 14-16, 2007). The first was, again, an impromptu tour of the buildings and grounds that elicited stories about almost every artefact and photo in the museum and Hall of Fame as well as the history of the area and ghost stories. Again, I recreated the two hour tour after the fact. The following day I conducted a more formal pilot interview with the Special Events Coordinator, a semi-retired ringmaster who led my tour the previous day, the President of the Board, and some members of the office staff. This interview resembled a group interview or focus group due to the open plan space. The answers given sounded like sound bites from the promotional pamphlets supplied to me. The dynamic of the conversation was interesting and informational, but it did not evoke 'stories' or memories about the place and its activities. However, they had no problem signing a consent form. In fact they seemed very aware of the conventions of the interview process. Following that interview I attempted to replicate the initial tour interview, this time with a recorder and camera in order to document the props. This interview elicited the facts of the previous day but not the colourful stories of personal experience.

The pilot interviews proved the prop method to be successful depending on the props and setting. Props such as artefacts, memories, smells, and sounds were better suited to a casual interview, whereas props such as past activities, photos, and documents were better suited to a more formal setting. I also noted that movement of some kind, either walking or driving, offered spontaneous props that sparked memories and stories about practice and place. The ethnography description discussed the success and failures of this method. As well as providing practice in the method, these

interviews also provided useful context about the circus community in the United States.

Additional Research

On my trip to Hugo, Oklahoma I was given a tour of the Kelly Miller's truck stock complete with the multiple uses for each, repairs planned for the winter, and the stories behind the repairs, for example a fire in an accommodation space during a drive. In addition to the cemetery, I was also taken on a tour of the public library, the site of a future museum dedicated to Hugo's circus history, a local diner which serves as the current museum, and elementary school, all of which are preserving and continuing the particular tradition of Hugo circuses in day to day activity.

Peru, Indiana, the home of the International Circus Hall of Fame, was once the head/winterquarters for the American Circus Corporation which rivalled the Ringling Circus Empire in the Golden Age of American circus (Davis 2002; Fox and Parkinson 1969).¹⁴ I went to the Hall of Fame to learn about its creation and its process of preserving the living tradition of American circus. The barns which hold the museum and Hall of Fame are slowly falling apart around the priceless artefacts they hold which are also slowly deteriorating (fig.2.17). I collected mostly stories and photographs of artefacts, a verbal history of



Figure 2.17: The International Circus Hall of Fame in Peru, IN on November 15, 2007. Circus wagons slowly giving themselves to the soil as they wait to be restored.

¹⁴ I discuss both these circus empires in Chapter 3.

Peru's position in circus history, and promotional literature.

I went to the Robert L. Parkinson Circus Library and Research Center in Baraboo, Wisconsin (November 27-29, 2007) to learn about the Ringling legacy in order to provide context to the discussions in community publications, and to find historical data on Kelly Miller Circus to serve as context for the ethnography and analysis (fig. 2.18). According to its promotional information, this library holds the largest circus archives in the

United States claiming to hold information on every circus that has toured in the country.¹⁵ The museum and archives are situated on the site of Ringlingville, the first winterquarters of Ringling Bros. Circus. Much of the data I



Figure 2.18: Robert L. Parkinson Circus Library and Research Center in Baraboo, WI on November 27, 2007.

Photo from <http://circusworld.wisconsinhistory.org/>

collected is in the form of

photographs of documents, exhibits, and plaques as well as photocopies of the Kelly Miller Circus files that are open to the public.

I was unable to make any useful contact with the Circus Fan Association, Circus Historical Society, or *Circus Report*. Kelly Miller's General Manager told me that members of all three groups made frequent visits to the show throughout the season. I decided to revisit this possibility during the ethnography.

I visited the Research Center and Hall of Fame in the off-season when there were no live performance. These locations seemed to present a tradition that was quickly passing into history. Hugo presented a tradition very much alive with families continuing to make careers and livelihoods out of the circus arts. I discovered that out

¹⁵ Please refer to Appendix 2 for sources consulted.

of the three fixed locations, only Hugo served in a support capacity to the day to day operation of the circus tradition, while the others seem to support the tradition after the fact, despite the live performances. This juxtaposition highlighted a theme which continued to develop through the ethnography about the significance of lived memory and forgetting in the maintenance of the American circus tradition. In the next section I reflect on the ethnography discussing some of the ethical issues and benefits and pitfalls I experienced during the 2008 circus season and what they mean for this project. I then discuss my analysis and presentation of the research in this thesis.

Reflections on the ride-along

Many of the issues I discuss in this section stem from the identity positions I took while conducting the ethnography. This project is not particularly interested in identity formations but the performance and identity of the researcher and the effects of those decisions cannot be ignored when discussing social science research, particularly when using a participation-heavy method of ethnography (Gregson and Rose 2000; Nast 1998). In this section I discuss my position of outsider/insider in the production of a research performance and how it affected this project. I touch on ethical issues and their resolution in the reality of the field. Finally I discuss the overall benefits and pitfalls of this method in light of these issues and the effects to the project before turning to a discussion of my analysis and presentation of data.

Earlier I introduced the tension of *blood vs. experience* that runs through this project. My tangential connection to the American circus community through my parents is not enough to consider myself doing ‘insider’ research however the trouper identity eventually afforded me by members of the circus gives me permission to use an

insider perspective and call on my personal experience as viable data (Fincham 2006). I earned this identity not through my circus blood but my circus work. In Frisco, Texas on March 21st I was called on, as a **towner**, to give my opinion of an act by the same person that examined and accepted my circus blood earlier. He said, “You’re a towner now. You won’t be in a few weeks, but you are now.” Throughout the season as I continued to show up on the lot every morning despite never ending rain and mud, periods of bad spotting (which resulting in limited electricity) that were later revealed as hazing, and virtually no form of communication due to a weak mobile network and wireless internet card,¹⁶ I was praised for my work and commitment to the show and accepted as a trouper for a brief time. Until I ‘run away with the circus’ for good I will always be an outsider on the inside (DeLyser 2001).

I discovered the conditionality of this ‘insider’ position when I tried to conduct more recognizable forms of research such as interviews. Some researchers have found becoming an insider beneficial in terms of collecting interview data in workplace/life ethnographics (Crang 1994, 676; Fincham 2006, p191) but I found it a stumbling block at times (DeLyser 2001, 444). Many circus members were interested in the research, a few were willing to participate in more formal activities such as interviews, but others became standoffish and suspicious about the intent of the work. This shift in interaction made me wonder if I was doing covert research unintentionally during my ‘time off’ because they forgot why I was there (Del Casino Jr. 2001; Fincham 2006, p194). I constantly restated that everything was potentially research however, whether or not I was dealing with informed participants was one of a few key ethical issues I faced in the field and writing this thesis.

The ‘start of season’ meeting in which I was to introduce myself and my purpose was postponed until mid-May. On the first payday I enlisted the help of the

¹⁶ Most homes on Kelly Miller were equipped with satellite dishes, laptops and mobile phones with reliable wireless internet access. In five months of field work, I had a working mobile phone for a combined total of 35 days.

Road Office Manager to distribute my carefully crafted consent forms. She handed out the forms to each person or family as they came to be paid. Most people were reluctant to sign and took them away to their houses. I was still an unknown and they were hesitant to agree to be a part of the project through the signing of a piece of paper. I was later told that some of the families had signed their consent to other projects and felt betrayed by the projects later. Ten forms were eventually collected although it was clear that consent forms were not appropriate to this place. Just like earning my trouper identity, I would have to earn their trust and support in order to gain their consent.

This, like my insider status, was accomplished through my work. As I proved myself to them, people slowly began to trust me and my research. Slowly members began to give their consent verbally and through their willingness to answer questions and share stories. Some members became more interested in my project and would engage me in discussion about what I was finding. Near the end of my time with the show, people began to be concerned about whether I had got 'enough' and what they could do to help. Not everyone wanted to be a direct part of the research through interviews but would answer brief, specific questions and allowed me to include previous conversations and observations. Members with whom I did not have much interaction or who I believe were not comfortable with my work are not present in this thesis. My work for the show helped to resolve the particular issue of consent forms but also present another ethical issue.

I was a paid employee for the majority of my time with Kelly Miller Circus. Initially I argued against this arrangement because I was on a research grant and was uncomfortable with the possible implications for the research which might limit the data I could utilize (Fincham 2006, p201). However, to work and not draw a salary would create unease within the community as it would appear I was taking a job away from someone else. In Chapter 6 I discuss the multiple roles of most circus members in more

depth. I negotiated this issue by accepting the minimum salary they offered and ensured that the money drawn on payday was directed back into the show through transportation or job related costs. When I gave up my job at the computer I also gave up my salary. I was not being paid to do the teardown work, as I had taken it upon myself to do it that first day, but I continued that job until the end of the fieldwork. I believe being a paid employee had more benefits than not taking a salary. As a paid employee I believe I was incorporated more fully into the social fabric of the show which allowed for a greater intimacy with the processes of the overall operation of the show. Practically, it provided me another opportunity for casual conversation with crew members that I did not have regular contact with as we stood in line together outside of the office every Sunday morning.

By being a paid employee and fully participating in the social life of the show, I was aware of a perceived allegiance to the people and the show in general (DeLyser 2001; Fincham 2006). To betray the show in my work by presenting an event or practice that I, as an accepted member, knew to be 'private,' or to misrepresent the show in some way would surely be considered an insult. This would affect any future research, or social contact, with this group of people and show. To ensure that I correctly understood particular events as acceptable to discuss, I am in regular contact with members of the show about the progress of the project and the activities and interactions utilized, as well as confirming and checking particular facts about the season. This has meant that particular power negotiations between circus members are left out of this thesis, but I do not think it has negatively affected, or greatly changed, the resulting arguments and descriptions. Regardless of these negotiations to present the show truthfully and acceptably to the show, an early decision to present myself as a married woman has meant that I am never completely honest with my participants which may present trust issues in the future.

During my time with the show, and during a brief visit in 2009, I pretended to be married. This is an identity position I regularly take up as a single woman when travelling to minimize 'interest' and one I took up during fieldwork at the instance of my family and partner for personal safety reasons. I was a woman travelling, basically, alone and I might be a target for unwanted advances. In practice I am not sure the identity dissuaded any advances as there were still quite a few offers of 'assistance.' In hindsight I regret the decision to lie about my marital status. The circus is a place of family. Being married and not with my husband did not ring true to many people and I believe these were the same people that were not as comfortable with the research. When my partner did join me, I do not believe many people believed our performance. There seems to be something about the performance of being married that cannot be restored without reference. Eventually close friends discovered the performance and understood its purpose especially women when they recalled experiences of being on shows 'alone' and assisted in the performance.¹⁷

Storytelling by nature is an activity with a relatively loose relationship to fact. I am well aware that many of the outrageous stories told over brunch or during nightly 'cocktails' have gone through many versions and revisions to achieve some entertainment value as well as share information (Besio 2005; Emerson et al. 1995, p128). The people telling the stories on Kelly Miller frequently referred to the act of swapping stories as 'telling lies,' fully aware of the revisions. Storytelling is an activity I call on quite frequently in the discussion of stable mobility in Kelly Miller Circus, however I do not relate any specific stories in any great detail. They provide more context than fact and when called upon it is in a general way or to the general pattern in which they progress through the storytelling session.

¹⁷ As stated, the circus is a place of family and most women remain with their parents until they marry. However, some of my friends did have experiences of being without their partners or families temporarily and were sympathetic to the experience.

In light of implicit consent I must briefly discuss the use of participants' names or the lack thereof. Where an exact quote is used, and I have consent, I have used participants' names. Otherwise, I use the job enacted at the time as an identifier. This is not to suggest that job(s) are more important than the person or completely define their identity, although sometimes that seems the case, but that, in most cases, the job provides context to the description and discussion more so than their name. This also provides a degree of anonymity. Particular jobs in the circus come with particular power and responsibility and experience (Crang 1994; McDowell and Court 1994) that are not apparent when using a personal name. The exception to this practice is in Chapter 5 in which the characters, dialogue, and scene description are compiled from a conglomeration of data collected over the five months of fieldwork (O'Reilly 2008). Many members of the circus play numerous roles throughout their lives and those varied experiences, as well as my personal experience and observations, produce the characters and some of the dialogue and scene description.

I left Kelly Miller Circus in August three months before the end of the extended season.¹⁸ This is a decision I later regretted. I was unable to observe, document, and experience how the show stopped moving yet continued to prepare for the following season. I did follow these activities through personal communication with particular members and daily online diaries about members' circus lives.¹⁹ If I remained with the show for the duration of the season, or returned later, I believe the end of season activities and preparation would have proven to be significant to the production of stable mobility in Kelly Miller Circus. As it is, these activities are only a minor part of this thesis due to my limited engagement with, and knowledge of, this part of the season.

¹⁸ The season usually ends with a Halloween Party in October. However, in 2008 10 days were added to the end of the season. In 2009, Kelly Miller's season began in early February and ended with the traditional Halloween Party. At the time of writing, the 2010 season looked to mirror 2009 in terms of duration.

¹⁹ Refer to Appendix 2 for details of specific online diaries.

By engaging an ethnographic method I encountered inevitable issues of trust and representation and positionality which were each addressed in the field in what seemed the most appropriate manner at the time (Cook and Crang 1995; Del Casino Jr. 2001; DeLyser 2001; Fincham 2006; Vail 2001; Watson and Till 2010). Many of these issues stemmed from an increased level of involvement due to my job change at the start of the season. I believe the level of access and acceptance that came with the increased work allowed me to investigate how stable mobility worked in this particular circus with a greater intimacy, despite slightly hampering my collection of typical research data in the form of interview transcripts, etc. This intimacy allowed me to investigate how mobility is lived and restored to create a stable community and also gave me the tools to present this project in a way that attempts to replicate the experience of stable mobility while also discussing the processes which maintain Kelly Miller Circus' particular form of mobility.

Analysis & Presentation

In order to analyse the variety of data accumulated during field work, I utilized an organizational structure that would speak to the project's overlapping concepts of mobility, performance, and memory. For me, the common practice of coding data into research themes (Cook and Crang 1995, p81; Emerson et al. 1995, p147) was not conducive to the materials or the experience in their raw form. The method seemed to portray the project too simplistically by creating clear distinctions between the concepts which did not mirror the field experience. During the ethnography I found storytelling to contribute greatly to the production of stable mobility in Kelly Miller Circus so I employed a narrative approach in my analysis (Emerson et al. 1995, p128; Riessman

1993). I used the artefacts and data collected in the field as a kind of prop interview of my data to spark some stories of how stable mobility works (DeLyser 2004). In this section I briefly review my process of analysis and the resulting presentation in this thesis.

To begin, I compiled 23 anecdotes or 'scenes' from fieldnotes, the calendar, route slips, emails, interviews, photographs, video, etc. (Emerson et al. 1995, p68). I filtered those scenes through three research concepts: memory, performance, and mobility practice (Crang 2005; Wiles et al. 2005) which produced four narratives of stable mobility (Table 3). The four narratives created a place to begin writing. Through the act of writing some scenes which were initially deemed minor, for example 'building shows,' became centrally important to the story. This is due partially to the act of writing as a research tool (Cloke et al. 2004, p337) as well as considering the state of the data.

In addition to identifying four narratives of stable mobility, I looked at the presentation of individual data (DeLyser et al. 2005; Lorimer 2010). I noticed a variation in my depth of detail that corresponded to the context of the data. For example, descriptions of drives were heavily detailed when there were problems. The same held true for lot diagrams. Diagrams with the most detail were typically drawn on days when the lot was unusual. This research practice began to speak to the significance of the data as well as how memory worked within the circus. A central argument of stable mobility is the maintenance of a relatively stable situation despite inevitable disruptions. The detail of my data was much greater during moments of disruption and restorations (Pearson and Shanks 2001). In order to show how the place of Kelly Miller Circus is maintained through stable mobility I highlighted the disruptions to place in order to explain the mundaneity and transformative nature of mobility processes in Kelly Miller. This moment in analysis, coupled with the

fieldwork, showed the concept of improvisation to be more important than previously expected and led to the integration of the narrative ‘Daily Puzzle’ into each of the three empirical chapters (Table 3).

Table 3: Uncovering Narrative Themes

Narrative			Scene	Memory	Perform	Mobility practice	Comments					
			Search for style	✓	✓		Staging					
			Language**	✓	✓							
			Memorable lots*	✓	✓		Just one day					
			Power of space***		✓	✓	Staging, improv					
			Going to town		✓		Staging					
			Building shows				Improv					
			Driving**		✓	✓						
			Parking (spotting)***	✓	✓	✓	Improv					
			Unloading/packing down**		✓	✓	Just one day					
			Pulling on & off***		✓	✓						
			Running order	✓	✓	✓	Staging, tradition					
			Dinner & a show***		✓	✓						
			Two-day stand*			✓						
			Trouper or townner	✓	✓		Staging, method					
			Performing research	✓			Staging, method					
			Show before the show**				Staging					
			Circus fans	✓								
			Ringling presents...*	✓			Staging					
			Name & a tent **				Staging					
			Weather watching*		✓	✓						
			America's Own Bar N Grille	✓			Method					
			Smell of diesel in the morning				Staging, method					
			Circus rigging		✓		Improv					
* Level of Importance												
Narrative Key												
	Creating /Dismantling place (CH.4)				Presentation (CH.5)			Maintenance (CH. 6)			Daily Puzzle	

In order to identify narratives of stable mobility in Kelly Miller, I wrote 23 stories, or scenes, and then filtered those scenes through the concepts of the thesis.

To reflect the subject of the circus as well as the concept of stable mobility each empirical chapter is written in a different style to reflect different elements of the concept of stable mobility as it works in Kelly Miller Circus (Crang 2005; Pratt 2000b; Riessman 1993). While each empirical chapter addresses the central concerns of this thesis, they each focus primarily on one aspect of the stable mobile concept. Chapter 4 is written as a journal of movement with each bundle of mobility processes presented in order temporally but set on a different lot. This format creates the illusion of one day’s

routine while discussing how the movement of Kelly Miller is restored daily. In this way, the chapter illustrates the stable work of each day that maintains Kelly Miller Circus' daily movement between towns. Chapter 5 is written as a script of movement in which the characters describe and explain their movement within the lot. This highlights the way each performance of movement cues another set of performances while discussing the production of a stage for movement. The narrative structure of a script illustrates the presentational manner of life on Kelly Miller Circus while presenting the importance of mobilization processes to the stability of that life. Finally, Chapter 6 is written in a more typical academic style in order to reflect the 'ordered mess' and disruption of the ethnography and circus life. This chapter discusses the significance of improvisational performances which allow for, and maintain, flexibility within the processes of mobility and stability in Kelly Miller Circus. Each chapter restores behaviour in textual form using the research data as traces which spark similar performances that will never be able to replicate that on which they are based, but are recognizable representations (Pearson and Shanks 2001; Roach 1996a; Schechner 1985).

Performing Research

The ethnographic ride-along revealed elements of Kelly Miller Circus that cannot be fully explained or verbalized, but that can only be captured and understood as they take place and are performed (Morton 2005, p670). During my time with Kelly Miller Circus I was repeatedly asked, "So when do you want to start your research?" "Being here is my research," I replied. The circus and I both had some idea of how 'doing research' looked. They needed to see me taking photographs, asking questions,

and taking notes (although many would limit their involvement with those activities). I needed to see them live and work and live and work beside them. In the end the people of Kelly Miller and I created a research relationship in which, I believe, we were both comfortable (Carmeli 1991a; Del Casino Jr. 2001).

During five months of fieldwork my research went through four distinct reworkings. As the circumstances of the field changed so did my role as a circus employee and researcher. Each change represents a kind of rupture, or unexpected change, in my research performances that resulted in refocusings of my research performance. However, in each case the overall concerns of the research, about the stable work of mobility, the role of mobilization to stability, and the need for flexibility in all work and processes, were maintained but perhaps addressed slightly differently. The decisions made in 'the field' to change or alter my research activities sprung from practical concerns about living and working on the move, as well as research concerns about gathering appropriate data (Del Casino Jr. 2001). These moments of rupture in my research performance required me to refocus my activities in such a way that would also maintain the motives of the original research plan of seeing mobility differently through the concept of stable mobility. Taking time to learn and understand life on a circus lot allowed me to see how it is possible to engage the concept of stable mobility in theory and methodological approach. I believe I accomplished this engagement by working with the inevitable 'losses of control' and paying attention to how they maintained my circus life and thus my research performance as well as reflecting the fieldwork experience in my writing.

The ethnographic ride-along, like the stable mobility concept, was inspired by the context of movement presented by Kelly Miller Circus. The strength of this particular mobile method, and mobile methods more generally, is the ability to recover and investigate not only the physical movement of the circus but also the significance of

the bodily practice. In the case of this research, a mobile method uncovered the importance of processes of performance and memory for understanding how the physical movement is maintained through bodily practice and performance. This presents a contribution to mobile method construction that argues, not for the mere addition of physical movement to conventional methods of participant observation or interviewing, but the construction of a mobile perspective which may reveal new or unusual ways of understanding how mobility is produced and maintained. Here in Kelly Miller Circus processes of performance and memory are revealed to be vital to the production of a circus and its maintenance that, surprisingly, takes the emphasis off the usual preoccupation with the 'outsider' identities of circus based on their performances, and directs it toward the value of their daily work for understanding how mobility-systems are maintained beyond their lot.

In the following chapter I 'set the scene' for the project by providing a brief history lesson on the American circus and Kelly Miller Circus's place in that tradition. I also outline the general seasonal and daily operations of Kelly Miller Circus. This chapter illustrates how the particular processes of mobility of Kelly Miller are informed by historical mobility as well as contemporary practices to create a specific formation of movement, narrative, and practice (Cresswell 2010, p17). Following that, I present the first of three empirical engagements with the concept of stable mobility in the place of Kelly Miller Circus in Chapter 4 which focuses on the specific formation of the relatively stable work that maintains Kelly Miller's daily drive between towns. This work is shown to be not only specific to Kelly Miller Circus, but also specific to each drive and each town which illustrates one way in which flexibility maintains the processes of mobility while also allowing for the inevitable transformation of restored behaviours.

Chapter 3

The American Circus: A moving 'location' for a case study

At the height of summer in 2008 around 40 circuses toured the continental United States.²⁰ Some these circuses were one-off shows in arenas or buildings, some had multiple units touring under the same name, some only toured county fairs and carnivals. Some of these circuses played in only a few towns over the course of the season, which generally stretches between March and November. Some were large with over a hundred employees and others had only 20. An estimated 3500 people work in circuses around the country.²¹ About 15 of those circuses travelled daily and performed under a tent. These are known as **mudshows**. However, all of these circuses performed in a ring with a 42 foot diameter (Fox and Parkinson 1969; Stoddart 2000, p34).²² In today's changing circus, where the skills of the ring are now visible in everything from dance and theatre performances to reality television, the presence of the 42 foot diameter ring is the defining

feature of a circus. Kelly Miller Circus is one of the 15 that travel daily and perform under a tent (fig. 3.1). In the 2008 season (the year I toured with them) Kelly Miller had approximately 70 employees performing about



Figure 3.1: Southwood, New York on July 15.

²⁰ Refer to Appendix 2 for details of personal communications. Much of the information in this chapter was gathered in this way due to the nature of circus research and information storage in the United States.

²¹ This number does not reflect the people working in the circus *industry* which could be said to include museums, archives, fan networks, authors, office workers, costume makers, etc.

²² The prevailing definition of a circus for most circus historians and enthusiasts, which I have discovered through many conversations over the last five years, is the presence of a ring. Only circuses that perform in a ring are included in these estimates which were provided by the Circus Fan Association and Circus Historical Society, as well as individuals working in the circus community.

23 different jobs. Most employees were generational circus members or have spent the majority of their lives working for circuses. Its 18 show vehicles and 20 house trailers travelled approximately 11,000 miles across 16 states. They set up in 215 towns and performed at least twice in each and up to four or six times in at least 20 of those towns. The tent seats up to 1200 people. At least 20 shows were sold out, but most audiences numbered between 400-800 people. According to the road office, the 2008 edition of the Kelly Miller Circus was viewed in about 470 performances by approximately 380,000 people.²³ This chapter serves as an introduction to the circus tradition in the United States and provides context for the particular setting of this project.

While this project is not a historical one, history plays an important role in how circuses operate today and so must be addressed. The following relatively brief description of the circus tradition in America will highlight key moments in its development as well as a few notable events which shaped those developments. In this chapter I also describe, in a bit more detail, the relevance of Circus World Museum and the International Circus Hall of Fame (introduced in Chapter 2 as sites of additional research), to the shaping of this particular project of stable mobility. Finally, I relate the history of Kelly Miller Circus in particular and describe, in general terms, the seasonal and daily operations and schedule of this particular American circus.

The Circus in America

The history of circus in America is one entwined with myth (Davis 2002; Fox and Parkinson 1969; Stoddart 2000). This situation is accepted, and perhaps even encouraged, by circus historians, the majority of whom are also Circus Fans. However,

²³ All statistics provided by the Kelly Miller Circus road and home offices.

this element of myth and lack of consensus seems to infuriate many researchers (Carlyon 2001; O'Nan 2000; Stoddart 2000). I find this mythical element revealing of the way memory works in the maintenance of circus tradition. While the dates and specifics may vary from telling to telling the people and events remain the same. American circus history is documented primarily by amateur historians through two publications, *Bandwagon*, the journal of the Circus Historical Society and *The White Tops*, the magazine of the Circus Fan Association.²⁴ I compiled the following brief history primarily from four sources. Two are academic historic endeavours and the other two are by community-recognized circus historians.

It is generally recognized by circus historians that the beginnings of the American circus actually occurred on the south bank of the River Thames near Westminster (Davis 2002; Fox and Parkinson 1969; Stoddart 2000). In 1768 (or 1770 or 1772) Philip Astley created a trick horse-riding show in a semi-permanent building. It is not so much the show itself or the type of building that marks the birth of a distinctively American circus than the organization of the performance inside a 42 foot diameter ring with the audience surrounding the action. In 1792 (or 1793) John Bill Ricketts, who was either a student of Astley's or Astley's competitor (or both), performed the first ever American circus in Philadelphia, combining trick horse-riding and clowning and tightrope walking in the performance (Fox and Parkinson 1969; Stoddart 2000). This performance was even attended by America's first president, George Washington. In 1825 J. Purdy Brown altered the circus format in a way that would become a distinguishing feature of the American circus. He put the first show under a canvas tent and created the ability to move the same show from town to town instead of having to constantly change the show to keep a particular city audience interested (Davis 2002; Stoddart 2000). By 1830 circuses in America had distinguished

²⁴ American circus history is also occasionally documented in academic journals such as *The Journal of American Popular Culture* and *The Journal of American Culture*.

themselves from their European forbearers in a variety of ways. Not only did they perform under tents and move frequently, they also heralded their arrival in town with elaborate parades, carried a menagerie of exotic animals, and some even travelled by the newly constructed railroads (Davis 2002).

Innovation and invention filled the early decades of American circus history. New technologies and systems for dismantling and reassembling larger tents and seating were created as well as new ways to light and transport these mobile performances. In addition to using a canvas tent to facilitate movement to new audiences, some circuses created shows on river boats that would travel up and down the Mississippi River and its tributaries in the search for new audiences. However, the real innovation in travel came around 1871 when a circus partially owned by P.T. Barnum, who would one day become pre-eminent in the circus industry, purchased its own specially made railroad cars (Fox and Parkinson 1969). This marked the beginning of the Golden Age of American circus. This is a period (approximately 1871-1929) of increased innovation, competition, and spectacle that comes almost to a crashing end at the start of the Great Depression.

In 1903 at least 98 circuses were documented operating in the US with at least 38 travelling by rail. This would be the highest number recorded at any one time in history (Davis 2002, p7, 21). However, the actual number of operating circuses could be much larger or smaller. Since 1793, through the Golden Age, there were hundreds of circuses operating within the U.S., many only lasting one season under one title. The title, animal stock, and equipment would be sold and return the next season under a new title. Many of the early circus titles would last well into the Great Depression in one form or another and some have lasted, in part, until today (Fox and Parkinson 1969). The practice of reworking the same materials under a new title, is one way circus owners maintained and continued their own circuses and the circus tradition in America.

The circuses owned by James Bailey, the Ringling Brothers and the American Circus Corporation dominated The Golden Age (Davis 2002; Fox and Parkinson 1969). The bulk of innovation in this era was in the field of transportation and publicity as well as performance format. In transport, circuses commissioned specially built railroad cars to accommodate all the equipment, people, animals, and offices of the show. Some of these trains were over a hundred cars long. The efficiency with which these large shows moved and operated was an incredible feat in itself and often attracted just as large an audience as the performance itself (Davis 2002; Fox and Parkinson 1969). It is a story widely told in the circus (with varying detail) that the U.S. military, in awe of the larger shows' ability to move and feed their huge operation so quickly and efficiently, sent aides to take notes (Davis 2002, p78; Fox and Parkinson 1969).²⁵ During this period motorized machines began to replace human and animal labour in the creating and dismantling of these huge tent cities which were made up of not just the performance tent, but a menagerie, a cookhouse, offices and multiple dressing area tents (Davis 2002, p43) (fig 3.2). Throughout its history the American circus is connected to emerging technologies and responsible for technical innovation, from the being the first American performance electrically lit in 1879 to the creation of purpose-built railroad cars and semi-trucks (Davis 2002, 21; Stoddart 2000, p35).

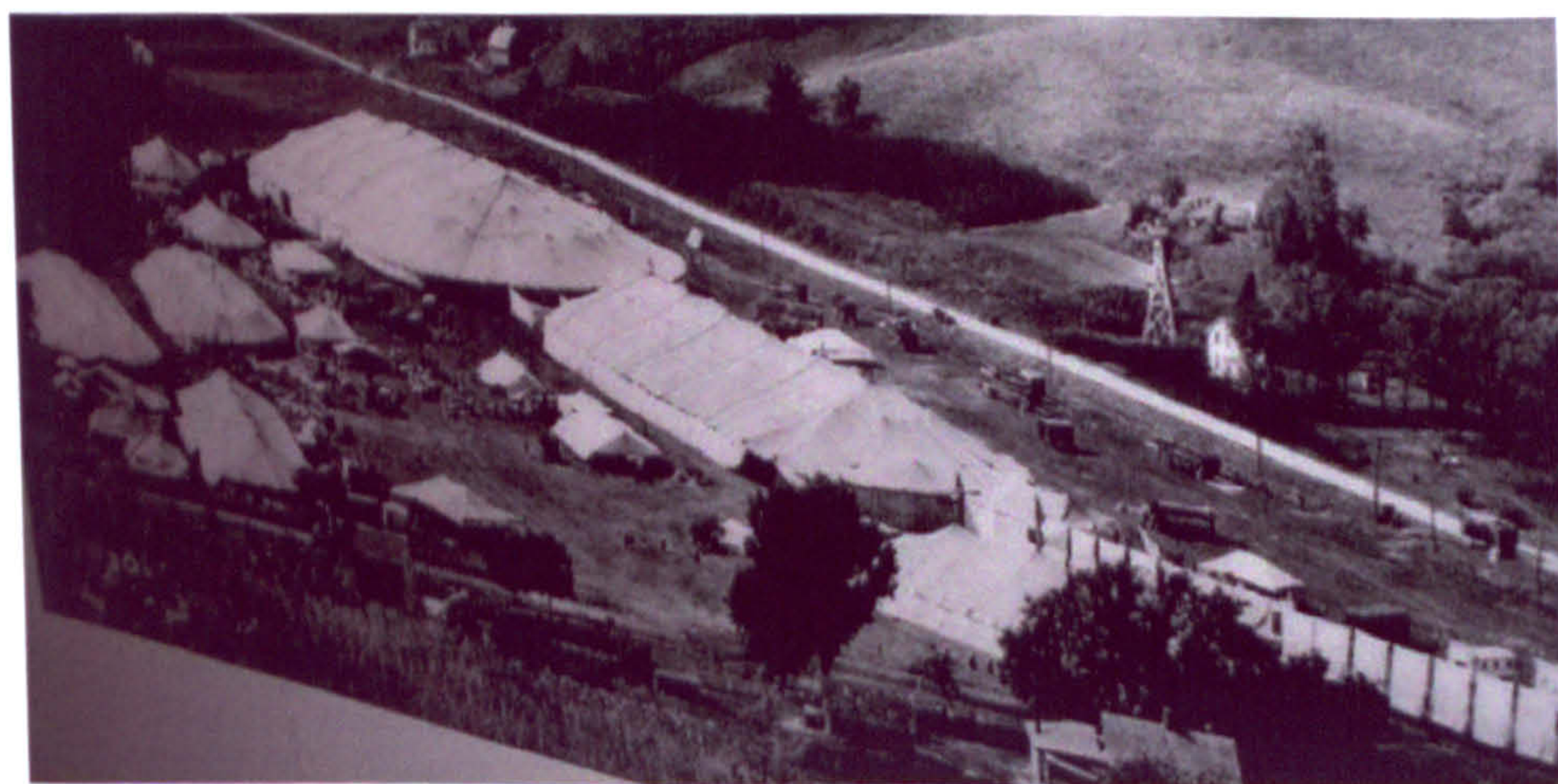


Figure 3.2: Ringling Brothers Circus in Red Wing, MN in 1915. Photo taken at Circus World Museum.

²⁵ I heard this story at least twice during my research. In one version it was the Nazis that sent spies to take notes.

The Golden Age circuses are also said to have created the press agent and advertising agencies (Stoddart 2000, p50). In an attempt to draw as large an audience as possible, advertisement for the circus began months before it was due to arrive in town. The use of posters in outdoor advertising was perfected by the circus with advance publicity agents posting hundreds in one town alone (Davis 2002, p42; Fox and Parkinson 1969) (fig. 3.3). In performance, the beginning of this period introduced the three ring format, which would become a hallmark of American circus. P.T. Barnum pioneered the use of three rings and two stages in 1881. This format created the need for the innovations in advertising due to the increasing size of the performance and audience numbers necessary to maintain such a scale of performance.

During this Golden Age, 'Circus Day' was treated as a holiday in the small towns hosting the shows (Davis 2002, p37). Businesses and factories and schools closed for the day. Farmer's would save for weeks and travel miles into town. In the early hours of the morning the circus train



Figure 3.3: Ringling Brothers Circus bill posters, Manchester, NH in 1911. Photo taken at Circus World Museum.

arrived and huge crowds gathered to watch it unload. Later in the day a spectacular parade of wagons, performers, animals, and the circus band would wind its way through town leading people to the huge tent city now standing on the outskirts of town. By the next day it was all gone and setting up in another town.

There were many shows touring the country at this time but two companies in particular held a kind of monopoly in the circus world. The first is the American Circus Corporation owning at least five three-ring railroad circuses. The second is the

Ringling Brothers owning at least three major shows by 1907, including their namesake, Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus (Stoddart 2000, p26). In 1929 John Ringling North, nephew of the last surviving (of the original five) Ringling brother, bought the American Circus Corporation outright and became the undisputed king of American circus (Dahlinger and Thayer 1998; Davis 2002, p40; Fox and Parkinson 1969, p100). Two weeks later, the stock market crashed signalling the beginning of the Great Depression and the end of the large railroad circuses (Fox and Parkinson 1969, p100; Stoddart 2000, p23). The large shows began to suffer from labour shortages and strikes and started to default on loans. In 1944, while playing in Hartford, Connecticut, the Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus tent caught fire. Over a hundred people were killed and the majority of the animal stock killed and equipment destroyed (Davis 2002; Fox and Parkinson 1969; O'Nan 2000). The show closed early that season and faced difficulties almost every following season.

This seemed to be the end of the great American circuses. However, a new breed of American circus rose from the ashes of the great train shows. The truck shows that had been touring the small towns ignored by the big railroad shows began to dominate the shrinking

American circus tradition (Davis 2002; Fox and Parkinson 1969) (fig. 3.4). As railroad circuses grew bigger and bigger they could no longer afford to play one day stands in small towns far from the



Figure 3.4: An early truck show wagon at the Circus Hall of Fame on November 16. This vehicle was used in Tim Burton's film, *Big Fish*.

railroad tracks. The mobility that distinguished the American circus and freed it from permanent structures and fostered self-sufficiency and innovation also restricted its possible audience. The larger circuses began to experiment with arena shows, which did not require as much self-sufficiency, and the truck shows, or mudshows, began to grow in size and number.

Through the 1940s and 1950s, the arena/building format grew to the proportions of the great shows of the Golden Age (Fox and Parkinson 1969, p114). These tended to be one-off collaborations under a specific title, usually one of the Golden Age 'greats,' that performed for a week in large urban centres. This format extended the circus season to year round and provided work for acts in the winter months (p118). Also, at this time both truck and arena/building shows started creating sponsorship relationships with civic organizations in the towns they played. This partnership with local communities is still in practice today as is the arena/building format of circus performance. The beckoning street parades of Circus Day also disappeared at the end of the Golden Age. However, they returned in a new form with the rise of the mudshow. The truck shows routed their brightly painted semi-trucks and trailers through the middle of town to promote that evening's show (p120). This practice is also still in use in today's circus tradition.

In 1968 John Ringling North sold Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus, the remaining show of the once great empire, to Irvin Feld, a former promoter of the show, and left the circus world (Dahlinger and Thayer 1998; Fox and Parkinson 1969, p128). The Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey title still performs today. Its three colour-coded units tour the United States and occasionally overseas. Almost 40 years later, the Ringling family returned to the American circus community when John Ringling North II bought a small mudshow out of Hugo, Oklahoma in 2007.

The circuses of today are generally divided into tent, arena/building, and theatre shows. Some circuses are owned and run by large entertainment corporations, namely Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus and Cirque du Soleil.²⁶ One brand of circus performance are the 'Shrine Circuses' which are commonly one-off performances, in a building or tent, with different acts each time that serve as a fundraiser for the 'Shrine' organization.²⁷ Tented travelling circuses tend to adhere to the traditional 'season' of March through November. Travel is usually based on a loosely predetermined route across a specific area of the country. These circuses also tend to have a set season of acts, although some acts may shift from circus to circus to substitute for injured acts or acts with other commitments. Most shows have animals of some kind performing in the ring, but others have moved away from animals acts under the pressure of animal rights activist (Stoddart 2000; Sugarman 2002). The relatively recent rise of circus schools in the United States creates competition for jobs with the generational performers within the circus community. Some historians wonder if the circus is no longer as exciting as it once was now that circus skills commonly mix with other forms of performance art creating circus, theatrical, and dance performances that begin to do away with individual circus stars and acts (Stoddart 2000, p55).

At one time in American circus history almost 100 documented circuses toured the country. Today the number is much smaller at about forty. Despite the shrinking community and speculation about its extinction (Hammarstrom 2008; Sugarman 2002; Templeton 1955; Truzzi 1968) the American circus continues to adapt and mutate. Kelly Miller Circus' 2008 audience numbers suggest that small mudshow circuses are quite successful. If even eight of the 15 mudshows of America have the same audience numbers as Kelly Miller, at least three million people will see a circus each season. It

²⁶ Whether Cirque du Soleil is a circus is a continuing debate. It rarely performs in a ring and the individual acts and skills are combined into one continuous show that eliminates the possibility of 'stars' in the ring.

²⁷ The 'Shriners' are a men's organization dedicated to helping kids. They are best known for their children's hospitals across the country that offer free services usually in the area of burn victims and lost limbs.

looks to me that the smaller circuses will continue to entertain the American public as long as they can find a lot to set the tent. In the next section I briefly describe two institutions committed to preserving the American circus tradition and a town that serves the people of the working circuses. These three locations provide context for this thesis and the role of memory, in my analysis, for the concept of stable mobility.

Preserving the Circus

The circus today is a shadow of the Golden Age but the Golden Age survives in the preservation activities of a variety of public and private archives and artefact collections throughout the United States (Davis 2002). Three particular locations of circus preservation stood out as possible research locations for this project. I introduced the Robert L. Parkinson Circus Library and Research Center at Circus World Museum, the International Circus Hall of Fame, and the town of Hugo, Oklahoma in the previous chapter. As described in Chapter 2, these locations incorporate a lived component in their preservation activities. Circus World Museum and the Hall of Fame incorporate live performance in their preservation method and the town of Hugo serves as winterquarters for three working circuses and historically held at least ten other titles since 1942 (Carson 1969). I compiled the following descriptions and details from historical plaques at each location and publications provided for each location, as well as personal communication and observation.²⁸

The Robert L. Parkinson Circus Library and Research Center is part of Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin. The museum is located in the hometown of the Ringling brothers and built on the site of the original winterquarters of their first circus. This strip of land along the Baraboo River is named Ringlingville (fig. 3.5). A few original buildings still stand and are open to visitors. In addition to preserving and

²⁸ Refer to Appendix 2 for details on additional circus sites and archives.

relating the history of the Ringling Empire, the museum also recreates a grand circus parade every summer with original wooden parade wagons restored onsite in a new ‘state of the art’ restoration facility. There are at least five other circus museums and archives in the country (Davis 2002) but this is the only one devoted to American circuses specifically and claims the



Figure 3.5: Ringlingville original buildings at Circus World Museum.

largest variety of circuses present in their collection and the largest circus lithograph and music collection. The museum also exhibits the living circus through live performances every day during the summer.

The materials and collections held in the Library and Research Center are immense and in varying form. The Research Center is a small beige building at the back of the museum’s grounds. There is one archivist, working semi-full time, attempting to organize the vast and varying materials. According to the archivist, the archive and museum receive frequent ‘gifts’ of circus memorabilia from fans that have passed away or are ‘cleaning out.’ At the time of my visit in November of 2007, the desks behind the counter at the Research Center were piled with overflowing folders. Each corner was filled with stacked cardboard filing boxes containing bits and pieces of circus memory in almost unimaginable forms. The archivist sat in the midst of it all, at a desk that dwarfed her, tirelessly answering emailed questioned while also trying to make a dent in the folders and boxes surrounding her.

The pairing of preservation and performance illustrates an interesting working of memory in the circus. I visited Circus World Museum three times prior to this

project, once on a family vacation and twice for previous research. All of my prior visits were in the middle of summer when the grounds of the museum were full of visitors. On those occasions, circus music provided a soundtrack to the activity and a bright circus tent stood at the end of the grounds holding performances every day. It was a place that gave the feeling of a tradition alive and well. In November I was the only one at the Museum for the three days I spent there and the circus music echoed through the empty grounds. This emptiness coupled with the piles of memorabilia in the archives from fans that died with no one to pass their collections, created the atmosphere of a place haunted by a history it is perhaps struggling to preserve. The Hall of Fame in Peru, Indiana enforced this view of a tradition trying not to be swallowed by history.



Figure 3.6: International Circus Hall of Fame on November 15.

Peru, Indiana was the headquarters of the American Circus Corporation. The International Circus Hall of Fame sits just outside the small town on the remaining land of the Corporation's winterquarters (fig. 3.6). The collection of barns and sheds hold old wooden **circus wagons** which stand in various states of restoration as well as circus memorabilia in the form of restored parade wagons, costumes, scale models, aerial rigging, photographs, and props. A long section down the side of the barn is sectioned off to hold the Hall of Fame. It is called the International Circus Hall of Fame but

appears to commemorate individuals that have enhanced or made their mark on the American circus. This section of the barn looks a bit more polished with better lighting and an attempt at climate control. The Hall of Fame display cases hold photos of each inductee, a flag indicating their country of origin, the story of their contribution to the circus tradition, and an artefact connected to the inductee, such as a costume piece or prop (fig. 3.7). Behind the glass the artefacts are slowly deteriorating, evidenced by small flakes of fabric or paper on the floor of the display cases. It is evident that great care has gone into the

displays, but they resemble more an amateur collection rather than the shiny and polished displays of Baraboo's museum. Outside, along the boundary of the field, wooden circus wagons slowly give themselves to the

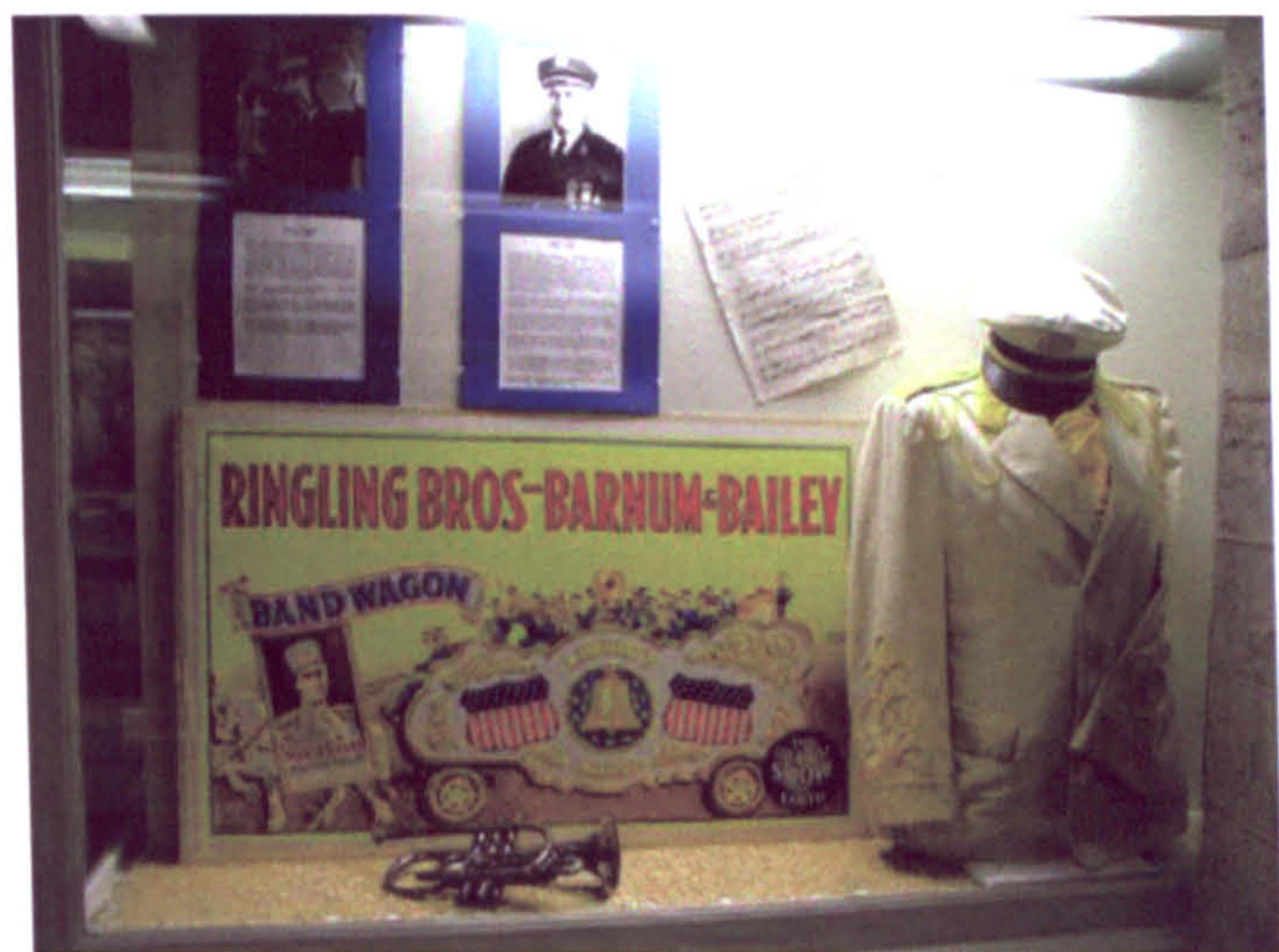


Figure 3.7: The jacket and cornet of circus composer Merle Evans.

soil before they can be moved to the restoration barn. Like Circus World Museum, the Hall of Fame hosts live performances daily during the summer season to commemorate the skills of the circus alongside the memorabilia. However, observing this place in November during the off-season, it was easy to see why some may think the circus is slowly disappearing.

These two locations of circus preservation, both sitting on former headquarters of former circus empires, seemed to tell the story of a dying tradition. The decay of memory was evident in the collections sent to Circus World Museum after their owners' death and in the physical decay of artefacts at the Hall of Fame. However, my previous experiences at Circus World Museum filled with crowds and colourful performances

presented a different story of a thriving community. The change in perception that came with live performance (and good weather) suggests the importance of the practice of circus to its preservation and continuation. The activity of living preservation and continuation is evident in Hugo, Oklahoma which currently holds the winterquarters of three working circuses.

Hugo serves as a base for performers and staff during the months between seasons and is called home to many ‘retired’ circus performers. Being retired, in this sense, is to stop touring but many may still work for the circus community in some way. Many performers ‘retire’ but continue to tour as office workers, managers, cooks, teachers, ticket takers, etc. The circuses winterquartered here are an important economic activity of the town and the town ensures circus people can remain there by keeping housing affordable

for people who may have little to no savings and no retirement pensions (fig. 3.8).²⁹ This situation is beneficial to many of the circus community but it is not always necessary. The



Figure 3.8: The winterquarters of Culpepper and Merriweather Circus also served as winterquarters for Circus Chimera which closed at the end of the 2007 season.

accumulation of wealth in the circus is as individual as the people. Some invest their money in real estate or stocks and create a considerable amount of wealth through their career. Others pour all their money back into their acts and equipment and have nothing to show for it but memories, memorabilia, and echoing aches or scars.

The local school accommodates the children of the circus when they are in town and monitors their progress during the season through the school teachers on each show.

²⁹ Hugo, Oklahoma is not the only town to operate in this way. Small towns around Sarasota, Florida also work to accommodate circus people, especially the small town of Gibsonton which has gained some fame as a community for retired ‘freaks’ and circus folk.

The Circus City Diner, situated on the short ‘main street’ through town, is a shrine to Hugo circuses through history, displaying everything from old posters to bits of costumes and fan snapshots. The elementary school reading room and children’s section at the public library pay homage to the circus through areas decorated in a circus theme complete with tent, ring curb, and wagon. The public library also has its own small circus archive section in a back corner. In the previous chapter I briefly described ‘Showmen’s Rest’ the section of the city cemetery devoted to the circus community.

Sadly, the repositories of memory

about each stone now lay among

them marked by an ornate

headstone in the shape of a parade

wagon wheel, and a memorial

bench (fig. 3.9).³⁰ Hugo is also

home to the Endangered Ark

Foundation which holds the second

largest Asian elephant herd in the United States, second only to a herd in Florida

attached to the Ringling Circuses owned by the Feld Corporation (fig. 3.10). The Ark

was founded by D.R. Miller in 1993. It is a breeding centre as well as a kind of

retirement home for elephants that can no longer work in the circus. The elephants that

perform with the Hugo Circuses during the season call the Ark home during the winter

months.

There is a striking difference to the way in which the American circus is preserved in each of these places. I went to Baraboo and Peru with the hope of learning about how memory works in the lives of the circus community and how it is preserved and maintained. What I found were dusty memories that only come alive through the



Figure 3.9: Memorial Bench for Bobby Gibbs, a legendary circus storyteller.

³⁰ There are other cemeteries throughout the country with sections called ‘Showmen’s Rest’ (Davis J M 2002).

performance of people, animals, and materials. In Hugo, I found the American circus very much alive and integrated into the daily lives of the town whether or not the individuals perform in the ring. Without the



Figure 3.10: The gate to the Endangered Ark Foundation on the same street as three circus winterquarters.

implementation of memory

Photo from <http://www.endangeredarkfoundation.com/>

through practice the American circus may very well end up a collection of rotting trailers in fields and folded tents in barns.

Despite my interest in these places, documenting the preservation of American circus tradition is not the aim of this thesis. This project of stable mobility looks at the maintenance of practice that allows a working circus to continue ‘getting down the road.’ These three sites of circus memory which span the history of circus in America from the early wagon shows, to the Golden Age, to the present, helped to illustrate the intricate relationship between memory and forgetting in the American circus and the importance of the lived element to that relationship. The next section presents a brief history and general description of the daily operation of Kelly Miller Circus which serves as the mobile location for this investigation into the production of stable mobility.

Kelly Miller Circus

The Kelly Miller Circus of today started as Al G. Kelly & Miller Bros. Circus in 1936. Obert Miller and his sons, Dore & Kelly, opened their small mudshow under a tent they made themselves with 7 trucks, two rings and one stage (Carson 1969). They made Hugo their winterquarters in 1942 and the title has been based there ever since. In 1946, this circus became known as a show of innovation when it introduced a canvas **spool truck** to its fleet of vehicles (Carson 1969). The folded tent is rolled onto the spool during teardown and then unrolled onto the ground as the truck moves across the next lot. This method proved to be a bit rough on the tent itself but created a fast and efficient set up and teardown that was adopted by at least four other circuses of the day (Carson 1969) (fig. 3.11). In 1956 the show created a fold out grandstand seating area mounted on a semi trailer which could be driven into the tent with the truck then used for anchoring the tent.

All the show seating would soon be built this way (Carson 1969). When John Ringling North announced he would move Ringling Bros.



Figure 3.11: An early version of a tent spool truck. Photo taken at Circus World Museum.

and Barnum and Bailey Circus indoors in 1956, Al G. Kelly & Miller Bros. billed themselves as the “Last of the Tented Shows” with the tagline, “See it now before it disappears forever.” It was their best season to date (Fox and Parkinson 1969, p123). At a time when fewer and fewer circuses were going out each season, the Miller Family managed to keep their circus open for another twelve years.

In 1960 the inventor of many of the time and labour saving inventions, Kelly Miller, died before he could see his final invention go out the following season. The 25th season of the show saw the first use of a walkthrough semi truck marquee. In 1963, in another innovative move, this time in transportation, the show attempted a steamboat tour of eastern Canada. However, the boat had many problems and eventually sank destroying much of the show's equipment (Fox and Parkinson 1969; Pfening 1993). In 1968, the year John Ringling North sold his grand show to Irvin Feld, Al G. Kelly & Miller Bros. Circus closed. In its thirty-two years on the road it had amassed the second largest touring menagerie in the United States, created equipment used widely at the time, and proved the viability of the smaller mudshows and the American circus tradition of daily travel, when the larger shows started to close or move indoors (Carson 1969; Fox and Parkinson 1969; Stevens 1954).

In 1969, the Al G. Kelly & Miller Circus title did not leave Hugo for another season, but its equipment did. The circus's equipment and animal stock enlarged a new circus coming out of Hugo. The Carson & Barnes 3-ring Circus run by Dore 'D.R.' Miller opened for the first time that season (Fox and Parkinson 1969). It is still working today expanding to 5 rings but contracting back to three at the turn of the millennium. In 1984 the Kelly Miller title was revived as Kelly-Miller Bros. Circus owned by third generation performer David Rawls, D.R. Miller, and Jesse Jessen, the General Agent for Carson & Barnes Circus. It became one of the fastest growing shows in the country creating a reputation within the circus community of quality acts, a clean lot, and reliable paydays. In 1991, the show downsized from three rings to one ring. The smaller size allowed the show to set up within town limits (as opposed to surrounding fields or outlying parking lots) which generated more 'foot traffic' publicity which usually results in an increase of about 50 more tickets sold.³¹ In 2007, twenty-three

³¹ This more recent history is provided mainly through an interview with the current General Manager of Kelly Miller and informal conversations with members of the circus community in Hugo.

years after its revival in 1984, Kelly Miller Circus set out of winterquarters under the ownership of John Ringling North II. At the time of writing, according to the road office, audience numbers are rising every year.

I did not select this circus based on its place in circus history, but it seems Kelly Miller Circus has a history of finding a way to continue contributing to the American circus tradition either through name or equipment. In this way it appears to mirror American circus history. What follows now is a general description of the daily operations and routine of Kelly Miller Circus as it moves through its season. The information presented here comes from interviews, observation and personal experience.

On the road with Kelly Miller Circus

Kelly Miller Circus is tied to Hugo historically and logistically through its winterquarter office but the place of Kelly Miller is maintained through the practice of touring each season. In 2008 from March 15th to November 10th the vehicles carrying the people, animals, and materials of Kelly Miller Circus followed white and red arrows for approximately 11,000 miles across 16 states and two time zones. They travel by back roads and highways at times doubling back on themselves and driving along the same strip of road repeatedly. As a general rule, and one that has been followed since its beginning, Kelly Miller visits small towns with populations between 2500-5000 hoping for nightly audiences of at least 500 at both shows. The show tends to stick to relatively the same route each season with slight variation in even and odd years (fig 3.12).

Kelly Miller Circus 2008 Route

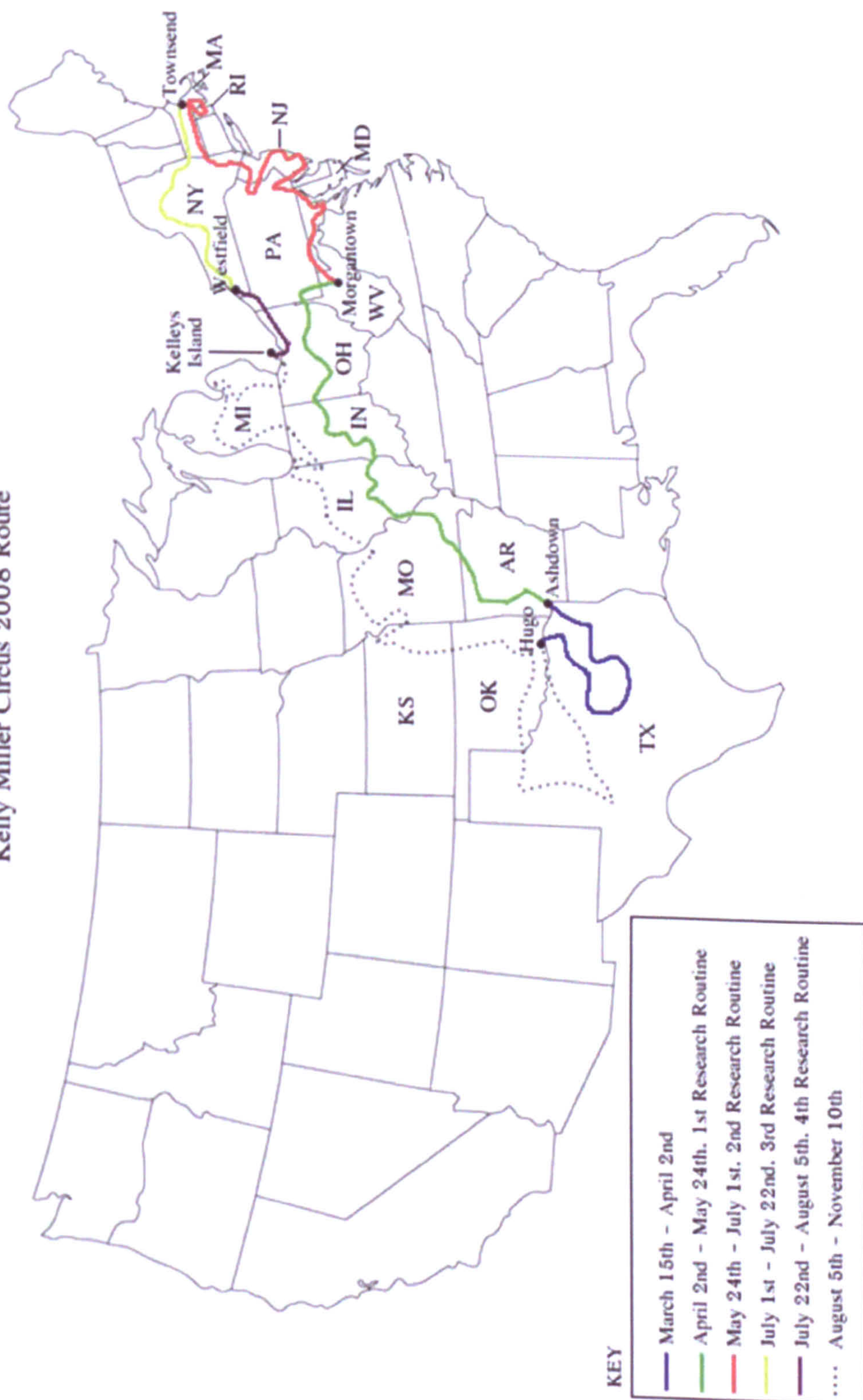


Figure 3.12: Kelly Miller Circus operates in a geographical corridor between about four other 'major' mudshows.

Most towns they visit annually, others only every other year, but the **booking agents** are always hunting for towns along the route that have not had a circus visit in awhile. Most circuses develop a ‘turf’ in terms of their route which ensures that the circuses do not compete for audiences, although it is not uncommon to pass other circus arrows and posters on the road to a new lot to find that the neighbouring town has just hosted a circus. This will mean a slow day for the second show. To the towns, one circus is just like the next. The exact route for a season is closely guarded and only released to the public & the circus community about a week in advance in order to hamper opportunistic booking agents jumping on another show’s date.

Almost every date played through the season is sponsored by a local civic organization and serves as a fundraiser for that organization. The local sponsors are responsible for obtaining all the legal permits necessary (fire, building, etc.), locating a suitable lot 300ft by 300ft, and providing a water supply and skips for trash and animal waste. The show prefers a manure spreader for the animal waste so that it can be used by the local farmers and not thrown in a landfill. The dates that are not sponsored by a local organization are referred to as **lot & license**. This usually happens when there is an open date on the route. It is better to put on a show and bring in some money than just park and not play. In 2008, of the 215 towns visited by Kelly Miller Circus, seven were L&Ls. All were towns visited in previous years, some were scheduled as L&Ls to start, either due to lack of interest from previous sponsors or because the show does good business without a sponsor, others were open dates.

Planning the route for the 2008 season began up to two or three seasons prior depending on each town and sponsor. Generally, the process begins with a phone call from the winterquarters office or a visit from the booking agent. Once a potential sponsor expresses interest the process may stop for a few months or a year. As the current season begins to come to an end, potential sponsors are contacted and dates are

set for the following season based on the traditional route. Each sponsor receives a packet of information explaining their responsibilities and offering ideas for promotion to ensure that ‘Circus Day’ in their town is a success. As the date gets closer, specially printed tickets arrive from winterquarters and the sponsors begin advance ticket sales (fig. 3.13). On ‘Circus Day’ the sponsor meets with the Road Office Manager to count tickets and settle accounts. A few days later the office at winterquarters makes a follow up call to ask about the success of the day and hopefully book the town for a future season. While the seasonal route is handled by the office at winterquarters, the day to day business and logistics of Kelly Miller Circus is mostly handled by the road office with support from winterquarters.

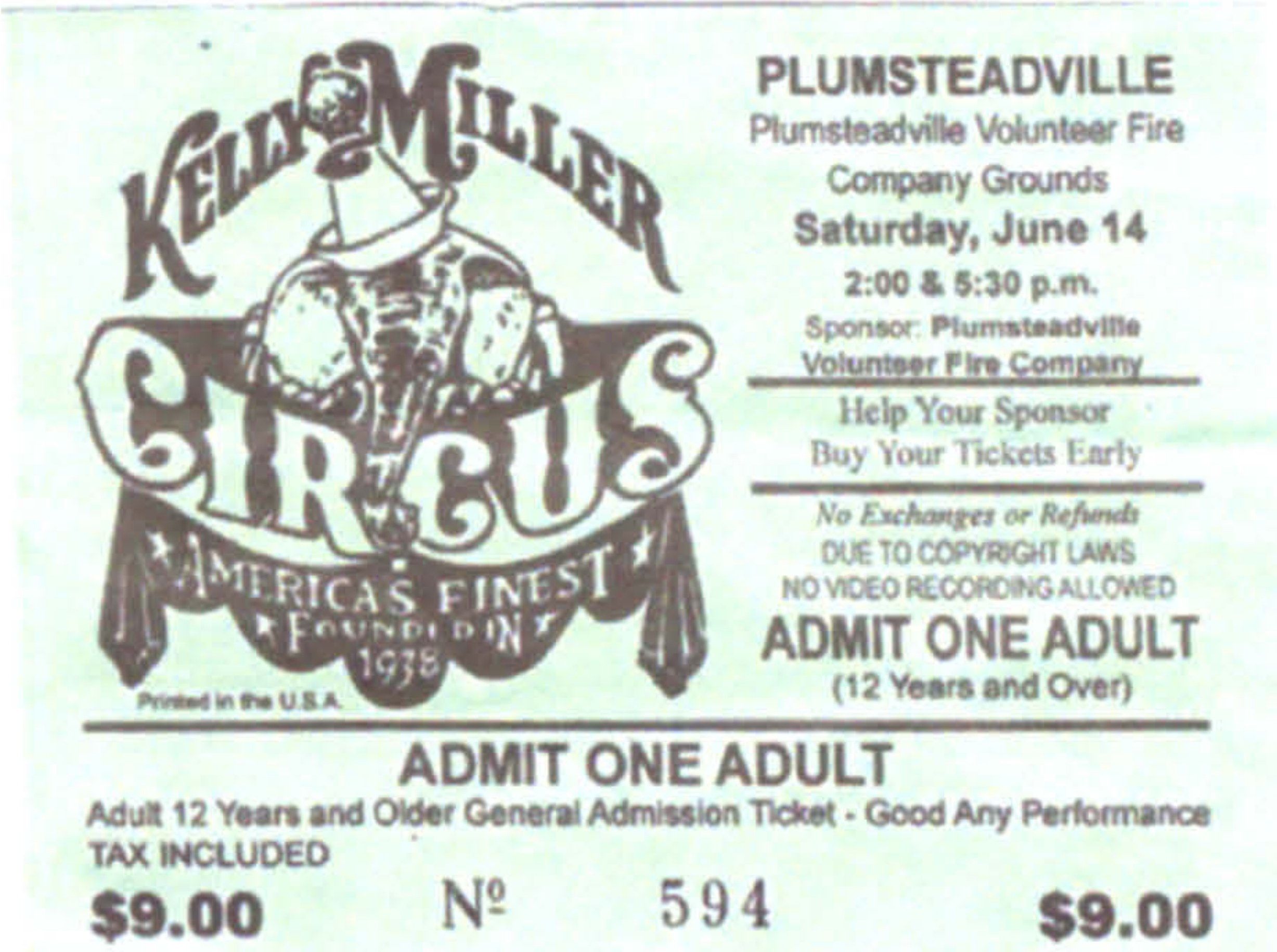


Figure 3.13: An example of advance sales ticket.

On the road, a town’s first contact with the show begins anywhere from a month to a week before the scheduled date. The first to arrive in town is an advance team (or person). Their job is to hang promotional posters, check the proposed lot and make a sketch, noting any potential problems to layout. They may also note the best route into town or which roads to avoid and check on the progress of any required permits. The lot sketch and route notes are then sent to the road office. The next contact occurs the day before the show when the “**24-Hour Man**” arrives on the lot.³² He marked the route for the following morning with white and red arrows and calls the road office with directions for the route slip given to each driver. The 24-Hour Man also makes any necessary calls to town authorities, arranges for fuel or animal feed, and notes the location in town of the grocery, laundry, or any other amenity that might be of note for

³² This position is sometimes also referred to as ‘the advance man’ or, in the case of Kelly Miller, the ‘logistics person.’ However, it is usually a man doing the job and is referred to as the ‘24-Hour Man.’

the people of the show. One of his most important jobs is to lay out the lot which means planning how the show's 30 vehicles should be oriented in the space given to produce a workable circus space. There is a preferred layout, but due to the variety of lots provided (rodeo grounds, which turn into fairgrounds further north, baseball diamonds, city parks, parking lots, vacant lots, and the occasional deserted shopping centre), this is rarely achievable (fig. 3.14).

On 'circus day' the first vehicles begin to arrive in town around 07:00. They left the previous town that morning between 05:30 and 06:30. They drive in the morning to allow time for potential vehicle repair before showtime at either 14:00 or 16:30. At around 08:30 the last truck, the **Shop Truck**, arrives in the new town. Between 07:00 and 08:30 the tent pieces are unfolded over the poles, laced together, and secured to a ring of stakes pounded around the tent area. The animal menagerie and midway area are set and the tent entrance marquee erected. The cookhouse tent is erected and preparations for lunch begin. At 09:00 the road office opens for morning ticket sales, the generator roars to life, providing power to the show, and the advertised tent raising begins (fig. 3.15). The morning set up is promoted as a 'free show' where the public can watch the circus unfold and see the animals fed and groomed. The children of Kelly Miller head to the cookhouse tent for school and purchasers head into town with lists of groceries for the cookhouse or materials for equipment and vehicle repairs. The 24-Hour Man checks in at the road office to hand over any receipts, pick up the file for the next lot and collect any personal mail. By 09:30 he is on the way to the next town. At 10:00 the Road Office Manager meets with the local sponsor and counts how many advance ticket they sold and what they owe the box office.

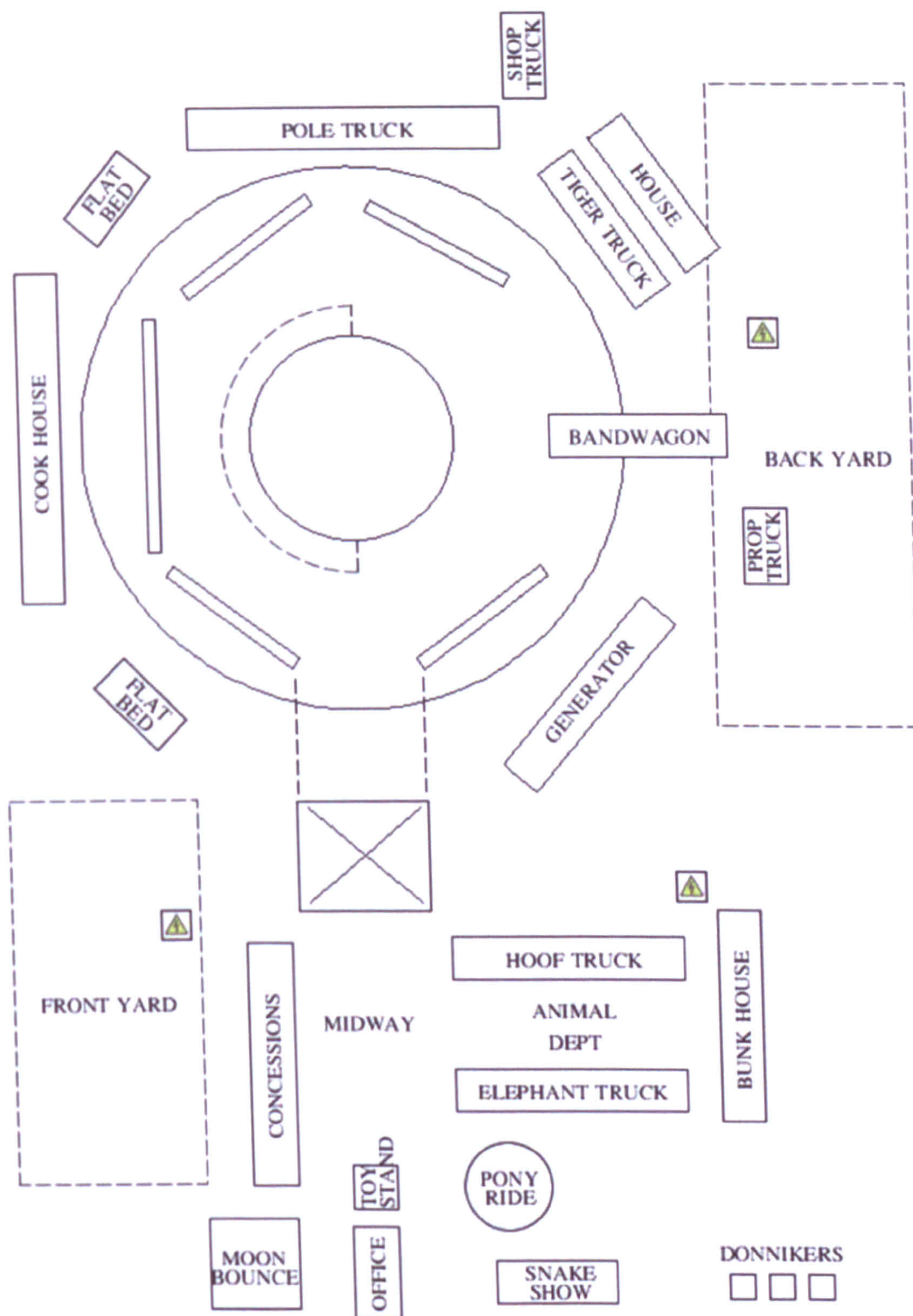


Figure 3.14: The preferred layout for Kelly Miller Circus as described by the 24-Hour Man on July 29.

By 11:00 the tent is up and the ring, seating, lighting, rigging and **bandwagon** are set inside. The midway attractions are set and the animals all fed and groomed. School is out and lunch is served in the cookhouse tent. On a weekday, at this time the pace of activity dramatically drops. The few hours between



Figure 3.15: Sweden, NY on July 18.

lunch and the midway opening at 15:30 are used to rehearse or practice, catch up on sleep, run errands in town, repair, clean and set props in the tent, wash costumes or whatever else one might want to do. The office manager and ticket sellers return to the office at 15:00. At 15:30 the midway attractions, concession, and souvenir stands open. At 16:00 the tent opens to ticket holders. The show begins at 16:30 with a 20 minute intermission around 17:30. Dinner is served in the cookhouse from intermission until about 30 minutes after the first show ends. The first show ends around 18:30. At 19:00 the tent opens again to the next wave of ticket holders. Performers that also work midway attractions may not have a break before the second show starts at 19:30.

The beginning of the second show also marks the beginning of teardown. As the first act begins in the ring, so does teardown. The activities of packing down equipment, houses, props, tents, and preparing the animals for the evening continue around the lot throughout the second show until the generator shuts down at about 23:00. Sometime during the second show the Road Office Manager meets with the sponsor again to settle the day's income for the organization and ask about their satisfaction with the event. At 21:30 as the audience leaves the tent they may notice that the entrance marquee and midway tents are gone. Inside the tent, teardown begins

before the music stops or the farewell announcement is made. By 21:45 the ring, seating, backdoor, bandstand, lighting, and rigging are packed away leaving only grass and remains of popcorn and sawdust beneath the tent. By 22:00 the midway is packed up and the tent is lowered to the ground. At 23:00 the last **seat wagon** is pulled into position for the morning's departure. If the lot was concrete or asphalt the stake hole may be filled at the request of the sponsor (fig. 3.16). As the back end of the **generator truck** is closed for the morning ride the lot appears to be an oddly arranged parking lot of vehicles. Some items are not packed until the morning and the animals are not loaded until moments before the trucks leave to do it all again in another town down the road.

On a weekend the pace quickens dramatically. The midway opens at 13:00 with the first show at 14:00. On the weekends, teardown begins and ends earlier but the generator is left on until 23:00 or



Figure 3.16: Filling holes in Greenville, PA on July 27.

00:00 as usual. Weekend evenings on Kelly Miller Circus are an opportunity for the people of the show to host parties and cookouts for each other. It is a time for swapping stories and teaching the next generation. By 06:30 the following morning the only hint of Kelly Miller Circus is a ring of patched asphalt, or trampled grass, and three white arrows on a post (fig. 3.17).

By setting out a brief history of the circus in America and Kelly Miller Circus, specifically, I provide a context for the analytical chapters that follow, each of which casts specific light on the conceptual issue of stable mobility. This chapter has demonstrated the performative and routine nature of Kelly Miller Circus' everyday

activities while also highlighting the importance of those activities to the preservation and maintenance of circus

memory. The towns of

Baraboo, Wisconsin, Peru,

Indiana, and Hugo, Oklahoma,

and their preservation activities,

highlight a tension between

memory and forgetting and the



Figure 3.17: Kelly's Island on August 6. The day after my last day of fieldwork. All that remains is the worn ring from the pony ride.

significant role of practice and performance in the preservation of the American circus

tradition. This discussion of scene setting provides a context of movement that is

dependent upon the preservation of memory and tradition through lived practice.

However, as the sites of Baraboo and Peru illustrate, the lived practices of performance

are not always enough to maintain the tradition. The town of Hugo appears to be a

dying town at first glance but is, in fact, a thriving base for the continuation of circus

livelihoods. These three towns present the importance of the continuation of the daily

movement and work of circuses as well as the continuation of circus performances for

the preservation of the American circus tradition. This context of memory and

preservation allows for the past to insert itself into the present in order to ensure a future

tradition. In addition, the description of the seasonal and daily operations of Kelly

Miller Circus presented above sets the stage practically for the analytical chapters of

this thesis, but also highlights the work of stable mobility that takes place beyond the

circus lot, in the form of the advance teams and winterquarters staff. Including this

routine work in the description of the staging activities of Kelly Miller Circus illustrates

the cyclical and continuing practice of getting down the road that was highlighted in the

circus view of mobility presented in the Introduction to this thesis. Here I showed that

the creation of future routes and seasons are in constant development with the current

season continuing along its route while also informing future routes. This continual development and referencing hints at the ways in which practice in the current season and future memory of those practices assist in the continuation of a recognizable route each season. This relationship between current practice and its use of past and future memory is discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

Throughout this thesis I will argue the importance of a mobile perspective when investigating stable mobility to provide an understanding of mobility as a necessity and not necessarily a singular event or disruption. The following three chapters relate different, yet intertwined, aspects of the stable mobility concept in Kelly Miller Circus. In the chapters that follow I discuss the ways in which processes of performance and memory work to maintain and stabilize the mobile culture of Kelly Miller Circus. Chapter 4 focuses on the continually repeated routine of activity that produces the physical movement of the circus from town to town. This chapter looks to show how the general routine and rhythm of the daily drive between towns is produced by ironing out the difference of each movement while at the same time slightly altering the routine to account for the difference of each town's circumstance. To assist in illustrating this contradiction in practice, the chapter is written as a journal of movement. Each entry maintains the general temporal aspect of the daily routine and rhythm of movement but is set in a different locational context throughout the 2008 season. This presentational style serves to illustrate the contradiction of movement described above while also discussing the role of performance and memory processes in the maintenance of the seemingly contradictory activities that produce and reproduce the daily routine and rhythms of Kelly Miller Circus.

Chapter 5 focuses on how the daily routine and rhythm of mobilization, described in Chapter 4, stabilizes itself and Kelly Miller Circus through continual repetition and renewal. This discussion, set on a semi-fictional lot over two days,

illustrates the necessity of the routine of mobilization to the stabilization of Kelly Miller's performances and daily practice. In order to highlight the ways in which each performance on the Kelly Miller lot is produced specific to its conditions, and highlight the performative nature of the routines, the chapter is presented as a script of performance in which each character describes and explains their movements around the lot during a two day stand, periodically interrupted by a researcher and a narrator whom provide analysis and context. By investigating the routine of movement while it is stalled during a two day stand, the chapter illustrates the importance and necessity of mobilization performances to the general stability of Kelly Miller Circus as well as the necessity of occasional disruptions to the performances and routine which also work to reinforce or reaffirm performances.

Chapter 6 focuses on the inevitable fluctuations, or disruptions, in the routine, performance, and materials of Kelly Miller Circus which result from moving to a different location each day. This chapter addresses the issue of flexibility in the concepts of stable and recognizable within the stable mobility concept presented throughout the thesis. This chapter looks specifically at how past, present, and future memory is utilized in the maintenance practice of Kelly Miller Circus. Through a more traditionally styled presentation, this chapter presents the performative idea of improvisation as a tool used for the flexible maintenance of not only Kelly Miller's materials and performances, but also its living memory.

The next chapter approaches the stable work that maintains the mobility of the show through discussions of the daily rhythm of becoming mobile and immobile. In doing so, the chapter looks at how the physical movement of the show is repeatedly forgotten and remembered through performances of mobilizing and demobilizing. This cycle illustrates how a recognizably stable routine is maintained generally and specifically on each lot.

Chapter 4

Just One Day: The flexible ritual of stable mobility

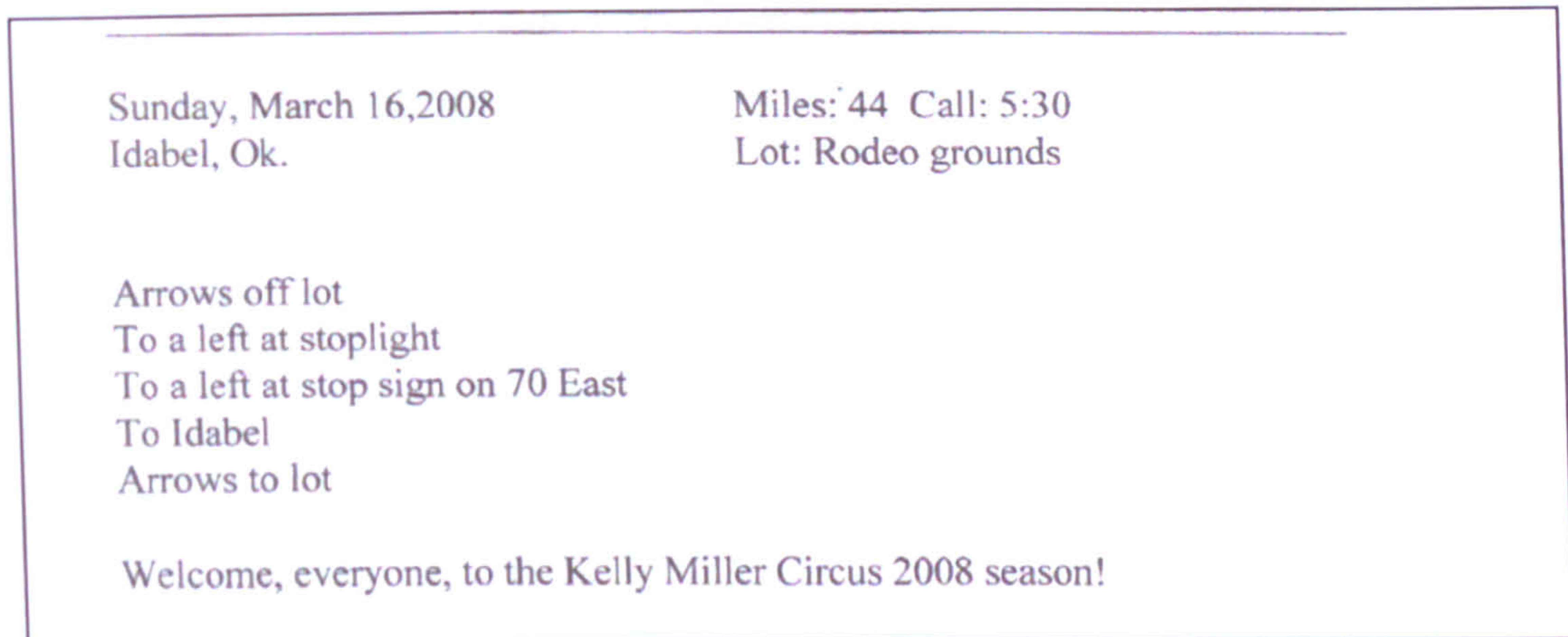


Figure 4.1: First route slip of the season. These appear on windshields and dashboards during the second performance. They provide directions to the next town and the first information about where and how Kelly Miller will spend the next day.

Kelly Miller Circus is in a continual process of recovering from, or preparing to, drive between towns. The actual drive between towns takes a relatively small portion of each day but is one of two daily events that direct all other movement on the lot. Each day a routine of movement, specific to the people, animals, materials, and memory of this season, is put to work in the production of today's performances as well as tomorrow's. The continual renewal and restoration of mobilizing and demobilizing patterns becomes a ritual, a performance enacting known patterns of behaviour (Schechner 2003, p50), of movement which maintains the overall stability of Kelly Miller Circus. It is a ritual specific to this season, but is informed by last season and will inform next season. The act of driving from one town to the next, which directs the ritual of movement, haunts the relationships between the people, materials, and memory of Kelly Miller through its direction. However, the drive can also become invisible through the ritual of movement, which is restored every day in such a way that the subtle differences of each day are temporarily 'forgotten' in the course of the ritual,

creating the feeling of ‘just one day’ being repeated over and over (Fincham 2007; Symes 2007).

This chapter describes how every moment in the day is directed by the inevitable drive by describing the ritual of movement that developed in the 2008 season of Kelly Miller Circus. It describes the way in which the continual renewal of particular performances cements them into the daily ritual (Roach 1996a; Schechner 1985). This chapter also discusses how the specific performances of each day are rolled into the overall ritual of movement rendering the daily distinctions of each drive and lot almost invisible. It is my argument that this is done through a process of selectively and actively forgetting, and remembering, differences through bundles of performances within the overall ritual. To illustrate the way in which difference is erased and restored in the daily ritual of movement, this chapter is structured through a diary narrative. I present a kind of journal of movement in which each bundle of performances within the ritual is presented in order temporally but set on a different lot denoted by a route slip (fig. 4.1). This format creates the illusion of ‘just one day’ in the ritual of movement while also describing and discussing how the ritual is restored specifically for each location. In a way, the route slips haunt the chapter in the same way the drive haunts the lot: both are always present and providing context, but rarely discussed and frequently forgotten. For the most part the descriptions of each section of activity are pulled from data gathered on or about the day and lot denoted.³³ In order to capture the rhythm of the activities on the lot, and allow the text to harness this particular character of stable mobility and in that way perform as well as inform (McCormack 2002; Pratt 2000b), the narrative and descriptive sections run without interruption with analysis following denoted by a line break and change in text. The previous chapter outlined the basic schedule and operations of Kelly Miller Circus. This chapter’s narrative fleshes

³³ Exceptions being 1) in the photos presented and 2) in the final lot which combines the experience of Sagamore Hills, Ohio on 1st of August and Westfield, New York on 23rd of July. This was done for analytical effect and because of the lack of rainy and muddy days during that part of the season.

out the details of those basics over the timeline of one day’s routine and rhythm but across the locational context of nine days in the course of the 2008 season. This structure highlights how the daily work of the general mobility routine is stabilized and at the same time made flexible each day in order to maintain the practice of Kelly Miller’s particular performance of mobility.

Mobilizing

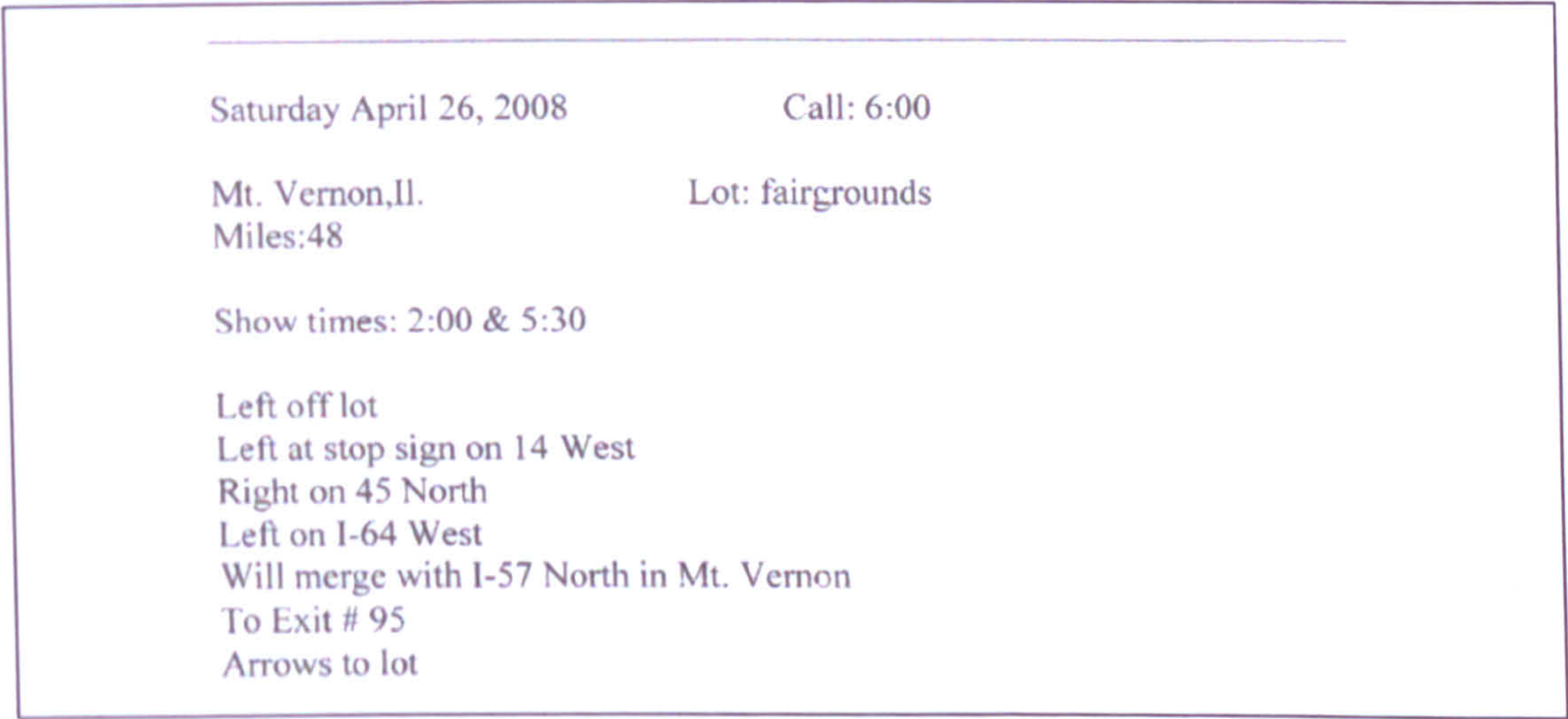


Figure 4.2: Note that showtimes are now listed. Each route slip presented here is a scanned copy of the original used during fieldwork.

17:00

“PORTA!” The Tent Boss calls, ‘doors!’ and once again, it is the beginning of another performance and the end of the day. The gates open and the ticket takers begin ripping tickets as the audience files in for the second show of the day (fig. 4.2). Traditional circus music from a laptop in the bandstand at the rear of the tent greets the audience. It provides ambience for the audience settling in with popcorn and souvenirs, but it is also a signal to the rest of the lot in their houses and the cookhouse that the show begins in about thirty minutes. At that time the people, animals, and materials

that make up Kelly Miller Circus begin the second show of the day as well as the daily process of packing down and preparing for the morning journey to the next town. It is Saturday which means earlier shows and an early finish. An early finish means a few hours of free time this evening to gather with friends before heading to bed.

In the tent, the lights go down, the music fades out and the show begins as the Clown runs through the back curtain and into the centre of the ring. Beyond the applause and laughter in the tent, the performances of mobilizing the show begin. The red and yellow tent stretched off the side of the cookhouse goes slack two acts into the ticketed performance and is quickly rolled up and packed away. Across the lot in the animal department, the blue shade awning lays on the ground and is also rolled up and packed away while the animals stand on the periphery eating dinner. Simultaneously, the small white and red tent of the **toy stand** is dismantled, folded up and stowed in the small trailer that houses the **snake show** and a separate bunk room. A few souvenirs remain to be sold at intermission. At the backdoor of the tent a long pole is run out the back curtain by a member of the prop crew (fig. 4.3). It is followed by a family in pink and blue sequins.

Mother/**Aerialist**/Cook throws on a short leopard print robe, slips a pair of muddy leather clogs over her soft shoes and runs home to change for her next act and continue preparations for her family's dinner and **pie car**.



Figure 4.3: Canajoharie, New York on July 12.

Father/Performer/Driver and Son/Performer dismantle a collection of long **perch poles** into smaller sections that are just the right length to be stowed away in a house trailer storage compartment. Around the lot, the houses slowly begin packing down for the

night. Through the next two hours they appear to pull into themselves. Shade awnings are rolled in and secured and outdoor furniture is folded up and stowed away. However, some of these day items like bikes and props are replaced by evening items like grills and tables in preparation for evening gatherings. In the tent, the area behind the ring slowly empties as each prop and piece of rigging is run out the back curtain at the conclusion of each use.

Once again, it is the beginning of the end. At this point in the season, Kelly Miller Circus had been on the road for over a month. This bundle of performances, tearing down and packing up as the second show begins, was perfected within a few days. As stated in Chapter 3, the majority of people working for Kelly Miller Circus in the 2008 season were either generational performers or had been with this particular show for many years. I was an exception. That being said, the 'original' behaviour of this particular restoration pattern of behaviour was familiar to most people, it was the details that needed to be perfected for this particular season. Where to place the props, when to move them in and out of the ring and tent, when to begin dinner, when to change costume, where to leave a robe and mud shoes so that they will not be in the way of waiting performers but are on hand when running out of the tent, are just some of the details which are quickly



Figure 4.4: Southwood, NY on July 15. Shoes and props placed under the bandwagon at the backdoor.

hammered out in the first few weeks (fig 4.4). As Natalie put it, "At the beginning of the season you are always early. Within a few weeks you know just how many dishes you

can wash before you have to head out the door.” The continual restoration of this particular bundle of teardown, packing down, and performing creates a performance of precision through daily trial and error and alteration (Schechner 2003, p23). In this way this bundle of activities becomes part of a ritual performance, and in doing so may render the daily differences, the trial and error, invisible.

I heard the second show referred to as ‘the beginning of the end’ fairly early on in the season and eventually I also began to think of it in this way. The juxtaposition of a beginning cueing end of day activities creates a feeling of a continuing cycle of performances that must be conducted. Many of these individual performances cannot be put off until later as each one cues another in the performance of mobilizing. This urgency and necessity cues the performance of driving which has been somewhat hidden by the tents and performance. But it also cues a kind of erasing of performance as Kelly Miller Circus packs up and clears almost all traces of itself from this location. Props are dismantled and stowed away as are awnings and superfluous tents. Preparations for the drive, which is not scheduled for at least another twelve hours, begin as today’s obligations are still in progress. All the movement on the lot is directed by the absent presence of the drive. Much like Till’s discussion of the simultaneity of the past and present experienced in monuments, the drive continually haunts the performances of the circus lot (Till 2005). Here in Kelly Miller we will see that the future drive is also always experienced through its ability to direct the bundles of performance which make up the daily ritual of movement.

18:30-ish

Intermission begins. The audience moves outside to the concession stand and attractions of a slightly altered midway. In the tent, the prop crew simultaneously sets up the tiger arena and pulls down the aerial rigging used in the first half of the show. In

the houses, dinners made between acts are hastily served. The washing up is saved for the extra evening hours. A large white pick-up truck is repositioned near the backdoor. Despite the extra evening time, coffee thermoses are filled with boiling water to ensure they are warm when coffee for the morning drive is poured before bed. This means warm coffee in the morning without using a generator or the stove.

The second half of the show begins and the mobilizing performance seems to increase in speed. The elephant ride platform from inside the tent is now in pieces at the back door and in the process of being secured to a framework on top of the truck cab of the bandwagon (fig. 4.5).

Sections of the tiger arena file out of the backdoor and are stacked against the tiger truck. The last piece of the ride platform leaves the ground as the '**Wheels of Destiny**' are pushed through the backdoor to



Figure 4.5: Girard, PA on July 26.

the right of the bandwagon and the elephants come lumbering up to the backdoor on the left. The wheels are dismantled and the pieces loaded into the waiting white truck. On the midway, the animal corrals are folded and hung on the back of the **Hoof Truck** as the animals are moved to their night time positions. The entrance marquee is on the ground temporarily blocking the **frontdoor** while it is quickly rolled up and stowed. The **butchers** count their money in the concession truck before changing clothes and preparing for the conclusion of the midway and tent teardown. The ticket window is closed and the office door locked.

As the finale music begins, the tent crew discreetly enters the tent from behind the back curtain. They are unrecognizable from a few minutes ago. Their bright red

and yellow polo shirts traded for dark coloured work clothes and weight belts. The last showgirl leaves the ring waving and the crew run into action. When the exit music finishes three minutes later, the ring, mat, **preferred seats** and railings, ground lighting, and seating barriers have already begun to disappear out the back door or into the **fold-away bleachers**. As the last audience member leaves the tent all that remains are the bleachers, patches of sawdust, the back end of the bandwagon now closed up and locked and the tent poles (fig. 4.6).

As the tent crew continue the work of packing away the tent and poles and stakes, small gatherings begin to form at particular houses.



Figure 4.6: Greenville, PA on July 27. The bleachers fold up and secure the seating barriers for the drive.

As is custom on Saturday the generator is left on for a few hours after teardown concludes. This marks time to catch up on chores neglected during the day as well as time to socialize with friends in the form of a group barbeques. At 23:00 some guests leave the barbeques to disconnect the houses from the generator and pack away the cords and boxes for the morning drive. This marks the end of the night for many. Heading back to their houses in the dark, some guests trip over satellite dish cables. These are dotted around the lot and remain out until the morning. As individual generators roar to life, a few more pieces of the day are stowed away. But not everything is packed up or locked away. The side doors of the bandwagon are left open and the elephants and hoof stock will be loaded onto their trucks in the morning (fig. 4.7). Inside the houses, kitchen counter items are moved into sinks and elastic hooked cords are secured across cabinets and fridges and TVs in preparation for the morning

drive. Fresh coffee is poured into hot thermoses and **call time** is noted before bed. The mobilizing performance halts as the show sleeps.

These performances of mobilizing are seamlessly rolled into the ticketed performance in the ring and the everyday performances of food preparations which are also intertwined with preparations for the continuing show in the



Figure 4.7: Youngstown, NY on July 19. In addition to the sound and lighting equipment, the Bandwagon transports the ringcurb, elephant tubs, backdoor curtain, electric cords, tent rigging and performance props.

ring. The time and place for each individual performance, each behaviour, is cued by the performance in the ring as well as the coming performance of the drive. The role of the ticketed performance in the continuation of Kelly Miller's ritual of movement is addressed in detail in Chapter 5. Here, suffice it to say that it provides a reference for, and enables, a graduated shift in the ritual of mobility performances. We can see that moments within the ticketed performance cue what seem to be dense bundles of mobilizing and everyday performances of packing down and preparing dinner. However, this lot and day provide a difference in the usual pattern of performances. On this Saturday some additional performances of unpacking, or demobilizing, occur when grills and tables and chairs are unpacked for a social gathering as everything else is packed away. This day's specific performance also highlights a way in which the general ritual of movement was created for this season.

Earlier, I mentioned that the performance of mobilization is 'perfected' through trial and error and alterations. The alterations seen here come in the form of guests leaving the barbeque early to finish packing away the generator and its related materials. At the beginning of the 2008 season there was a shortage of labour due to a larger issue with the availability of migrant work visas. This meant that performers took on extra jobs in order to ensure that the show ran as usual. This flexibility in labour provided a stability for the overall ritual of Kelly Miller Circus between seasons and within this season. But it also altered individual rituals which were different from last season. The stability of stable mobility does not refer to fixity or complete fluidity, but to the maintenance of ritual or recognizable patterns of behaviour, which may occasionally be in flux. This example of the ritual specific to Mt. Vernon, IL illustrates how the bundles of performances that make up the 'mobilizing' performance are maintained within the general ritual of movement as well as how they are augmented to the specific time and place of Mt. Vernon. It also presents a temporal pattern to the mobilizing performances. At times numerous individual performances are intertwined in a relatively short times period across the lot. Tomorrow morning performances of mobilization will occur across an even greater space, but within the same amount of time.

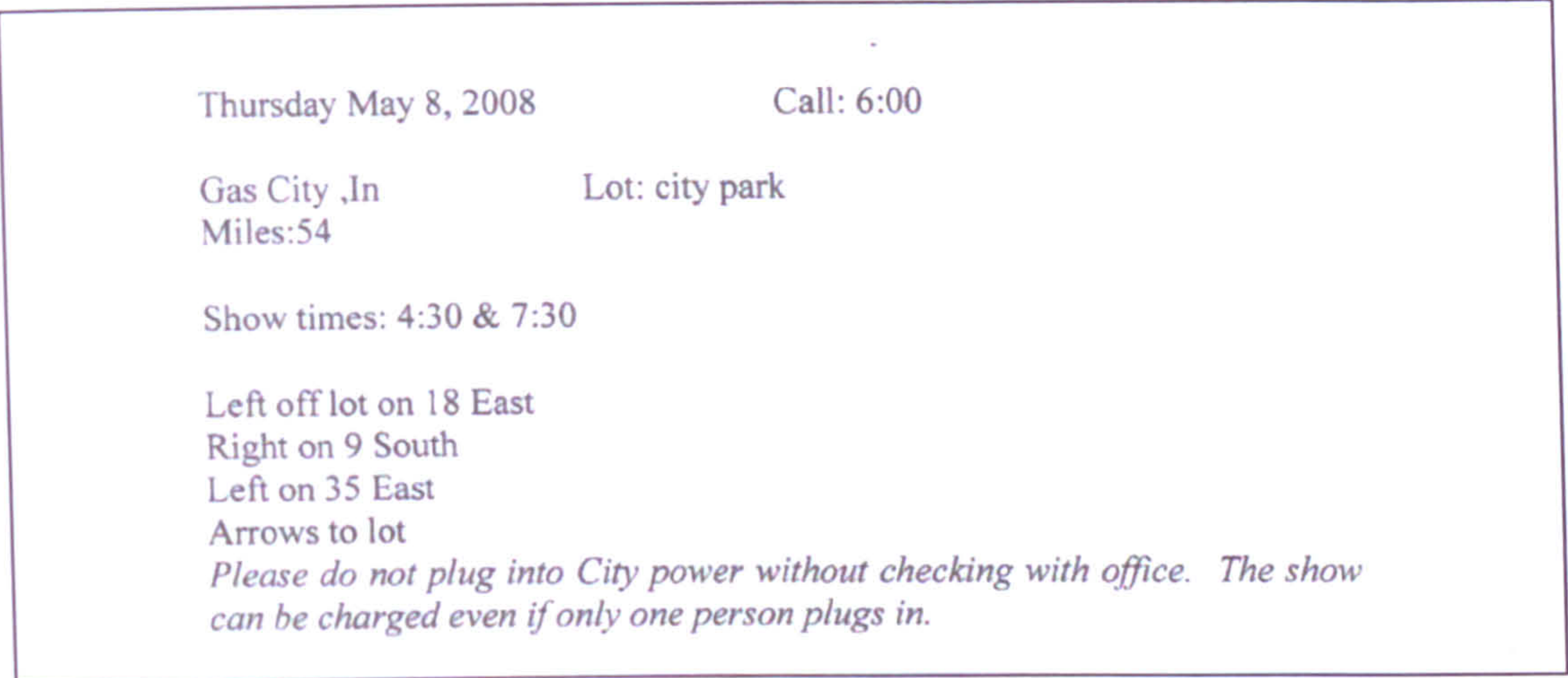


Figure 4.8: The presence of City Power, or C.P., means the ability to have power all night without the use of a generator. This saves on propane gas on cold nights when an electric heater can run instead. This can also mean hot, fresh, coffee in the morning.

05:00 Flora, Indiana preparing to drive to Gas City, Indiana

The semi trucks roar to life as the Mechanic makes his way around the lot preparing the fleet for the morning drive. The morning exodus to Gas City begins in an hour. The animal department is already up and loading the animals into their trucks before setting to the task of clearing the evidence of animals. As 06:00 approaches (fig. 4.8) figures begin to emerge from houses and **bunkhouses** to finish the last bits of packing. Bundles of blankets and legs are carried from **house** to truck. The children of the show will wake up in the truck on the way to the next town. The only light comes from orange and yellow running lights on trucks and houses. Specks of light seem to bob around the houses and trucks as head torches mark the movements of people stowing last minute objects like bicycles and hitching up houses to trucks. Satellite dishes are the last thing loaded into the house before vehicles reverse off their **boards** and then pause to stow them away (fig. 4.9). Some drivers stop at the cookhouse on the way to their vehicles to collect hot coffee, a pastry, and bananas to hold them until lunch at 11:00 on the next lot. A few minutes before 06:00, the first houses begin pulling off the lot. The Lot Supervisor is already en route to Gas City.

More and more houses begin to leave, most trying to get off in front of the red seat wagon and particularly slow drivers. Once most of the houses clear, the semi-trucks begin to leave after all their numerous compartments are checked and secured. The **Concessions Truck** pulls off followed by the Concession Manager's house.



Figure 4.9: Springfield, WV on May 25. This lot proved to be too uneven and the show drove to the next town that evening.

Once everyone is served, the kitchen is closed and the Cookhouse Truck pulls off followed by the Cook in her house. At about 06:30 the last two trucks leave the lot. The **Pump Truck**, which also carries a supply of tires, and the Shop Truck, both of which tow a seat wagon, are always at the end of the punctuated convoy in case of a vehicle break down. By this time the Lot Supervisor is most likely arriving in Gas City.

*This morning portion of the mobilization performance illustrates how Kelly Miller Circus is always preparing for the next moment in the ritual of movement. Here, the bundle of performances that make up the **pulling off** moment in the ritual are cued by the immediate performance of driving by determining the order of the convoy. But this is also cued by the way in which the show must arrive at the next lot to enable the next moment in the ritual, demobilizing. The vehicles leave the lot in relatively the same order every morning. The Lot Supervisor leaves about 30 minutes before call time in the **Prop Truck** hauling a seat wagon. He is followed by his wife driving their house. He will get to Gas City before the beginning of the convoy in order to discuss the new lot and resulting layout with the 24-Hour Man. The majority of the houses and smaller trucks pull off first which ensures the houses are set on the next lot before the semi*

trucks and tent potentially trap them in place for the day. The smaller trucks also carry materials needed to begin the demobilizing performance immediately on arrival, such as the tent, stakes, blocks, barriers, and gates. The large semi trucks are the next group to leave, usually with the animals and Cookhouse at the back with a few accompanying houses scattered throughout to be spotted by their respective workplace. This order is maintained whenever possible but is not always completely possible. This section describing the mobilizing performances of Kelly Miller's ritual of movement illustrates how the performance of driving is remembered daily in the direction of this particular bundle of performances. It also illustrated how the general ritual is maintained through slight, yet significant, alterations to performances based on this particular lot, which highlights the importance of flexibility in restoration to the overall maintenance of Kelly Miller's performances of mobility. The next section illustrates how driving performances direct moments within the ritual of movement but also provide opportunities for flexibility in order to stabilize and maintain moments within the ritual.

Driving

Friday June 6, 2008 Call: 5:30
Mullica Hill, N.J. Lot: fairgrounds
Miles: 65

Show times: 4:30 & 7:30

Right off of lot
Left at stop sign on 662 South
To a left on 422 East 20
Warning Arrows Only
Follow Signs**
To a right on I-76 East towards Philadelphia 5
To Exit# 331A
To a right on I-476 South 15
After Exit #1
Bear right on I-95 South 2
To Exit# 4
To a left on 322 East 10
To town
In town-follow 77 South
Arrows to lot

Figure 4.10: The early call for a relatively short drive coupled with the asterisks means that inevitably someone will get lost or breakdown. The notch in the upper left corner marks the scale of a road map. I used this to determine the length of each direction.

05:30 Amity, Pennsylvania, heading to Mullica Hills, New Jersey

When compared to a road map the route described is often not the most direct (fig. 4.10). The designated route ensures that the vehicles clear all underpasses, that no vehicles exceed the weight limit on bridges or roads, and that all railroad crossings are level enough for trailers and create minimum bounce for the animals in trucks. Some turns in small towns are too tight for large semi-trucks and sometimes the route avoids commercial truck scales on highways that can mean long delays. Today, the show is routed through the town centre as a kind of promotional parade. The considerations that direct the route render the satellite navigational systems of many circus vehicles obsolete. Where the route directs, the show goes with little question.

The act and ability to drive is frequently understood to promise freedom and instant gratification (Henderson 2009; Urry 2007). However, it is also understood as a

mundane practice of everyday life (Sheller 2004; Urry 2000, 2007). Here in Kelly Miller Circus, the performance of driving presents flexibility as well as confinement on a tightly controlled route (Urry 2007, p118). Not following the route could throw up any number of unforeseen dangers that the driver would have to face alone because the rest of the show is on the route. In my five months with the show I left the route three times, all of which were coupled with extreme anxiety. Twice to find a dump site for my near-full waste tanks, and once due to a planned road closure that had either gone unnoticed by the 24-Hour Man or went up earlier than planned. Each time, despite my anxiety, I made it to the lot relatively on time and intact. The anxiety was about possible breakdowns with no rescue (because the Shop Truck would be on the route) or arriving at the lot late and being spotted at the edge and potentially too far from the power box. My extreme attachment to the appointed route was about security, but for the show it is about maintenance.

The creation of the route works to maintain the materials of the show physically as well as maintain the performance schedule in this season and next. The route is not determined by speed but in a way which puts the least amount of stress on the vehicles and animals within the vehicles. It attempts to avoid delays to the next moment in the ritual of demobilizing, which cues the ticketed performance, which fulfils an obligation to a sponsor. This is another way in which the ritual of movement haunts the circus lot. Not only are everyday relations between people and materials directed by the continual packing and unpacking, but the overall schedule of ticketed performances and sponsors is reliant on the show getting to town in time to perform. The movement of Kelly Miller's people, animals, and materials from one town to another maintains its seasonal obligations to each town's sponsor which in turn maintains its ritual of movement. However, the performance of driving from town to town is one that is restored and renewed daily, which means that it changes daily, which means it must be flexible. The

route slip is not always correct and over five months and many **blown arrows**, I learned to be flexible in my attachment to the written route. In fact, I learned that the presence of the route slip allowed for, and created, flexibility in driving.

THAS 3.93
\$67
PROpane 4.00

Thursday June 12, 2008
Pemberton, N.J.
Miles: 30

Call: 6:00
Lot: Municipal building grounds

Show times: 4:30 & 7:30

Left off lot
To a left on 530 ~~East~~ WEST
To town
Arrows to lot

BROWN'S MILLS
STATION ON LEFT
PROPANE

Figure 4.11: The route slip is not infallible as is shown in the changed direction. It also served as a way to record the experience of driving. Here I noted the location of a filling station along the route and the cost of petrol and propane.

06:00 Beachwood, New Jersey, heading to Pemberton, New Jersey

In addition to the route slip, Kelly Miller Circus follows a system of red and white arrows across the country. Each mudshow follows its own distinct arrows but the communication system is the same across the tradition. The arrows posted on telephone poles, road signs, trees, or metal curbs are used in conjunction with the route slip on the drive to the next lot. They work together to maintain the route as neither is always correct all of the time. Today the arrows pointed West when the route slip says East (fig. 4.11). Today, the arrow proved correct. Arrows posted at intervals along the route, referred to as confidence arrows, indicate the correct direction after a turn or confusing junction. A series of arrows indicate a preparation for a turn or lane change (fig. 4.12). The arrows indicate not only the route but also the condition of the route. Another particular combination of arrows indicates steep road grades or particularly bad bumps (fig. 4.13). The shared code of arrows allows people to move between circuses and only have to learn a new colour. These markers appear on the route the day before

the show arrives but may remain for weeks after the show moves on to the next town. Along with some muddy ruts in a field, these red and white arrows will be the only trace left behind when Kelly Miller Circus leaves this town.

For a few short hours the paper route arrows are one of the show's most important tools in maintaining their performances of mobility. The arrows serve as traces for the restored performance of driving (Pearson and Shanks 2001). These traces were my first exposure to the circus as a child. Occasionally, while driving, my parents would cry out, "circus arrows." I never spotted the arrows on the side of the road but they told me that these told the circus where to go to put on a show. On one occasion we followed the arrows to find the show. To my great disappointment, they led to an empty field. There was no telling when the circus had been there. Unlike the signage systems described by Augé (1995), these visual traces only apply to the people that can decode them during a certain point in time, much like decoding restored behaviours (Schechner 2003). They will not lead

to the circus lot if followed on the wrong day. The route I followed with my parents was part of a circus' performance of mobility for a few short hours sometime in the past. This is an example of how the lived nature of the relationships between people and



Figure 4.12: Union City, PA on July 25. Preparing for a left turn.



Figure 4.13: en route to Chesterland, Ohio on July 28. Arrows indicating a particularly bumpy railroad crossing.

materials maintains Kelly Miller's ritual of movement. Once the last circus truck pulls onto a new lot, the arrows that served as a temporary trail will deteriorate, or vanish altogether as local authorities remove them, erasing the trace of the driving performance.

Again, the drive maintains the general ritual of movement specific to Kelly Miller Circus but in doing so may erase the specifics of each drive. Through this paper arrow posted at the side of the road, the drivers that recognize it as a trace of an earlier driving performance of the 24-Hour Man can restore the behaviour that is connected to it, the drive to Pemberton, New Jersey (Pearson and Shanks 2001, p6). This arrow may be all that is left of the performance 'drive to Pemberton' on the roads that were used for this particular performance. The route indicated by the arrows is a temporary stage for a continual restored performance which makes each performance singular.

Tomorrow, the drive will be performed on a different stage. The text of the route slip can narrate the journey to some extent, but at the end of every drive, the drivers must submit to the visual arrows to find their way to the lot as indicated by the direction 'Arrows to lot.' The performance of the drive is restored every morning but is always different due to its stage (Schechner 2003, p23).

Interestingly, the route arrows and slip only direct the show onward. Just as the ritual of movement is always cued by and preparing for the next act, the route and arrows are created to move to the next lot and ticketed performance. I discovered this on March 19th when I was asked to return to the previous lot to help fetch a truck that had been forgotten due to confusion over the driver. Trying to use the route slip backwards, I got lost twice. Each route is a one-way trip to the next town, however the combination of the arrows and slip allow for a flexibility in the trip. The visual imagery of the arrows maintains the mobility of Kelly Miller Circus but they cannot function alone. They are temporary signs that easily disappear or disintegrate in rain. They

also only apply to a temporary location. Unlike road signs or signs directing passengers through, for example, an airport (Adey 2006), the destination referenced by the route arrows will only be a circus lot for a few hours and is only understandable to a few drivers on the road. The arrows show the route slip to be, in some cases, more a general guide of the route. However, the route slip affords the possibility of individual flexibility during the drive that would not be possible if the show operated the drive by convoy or through the arrows alone.

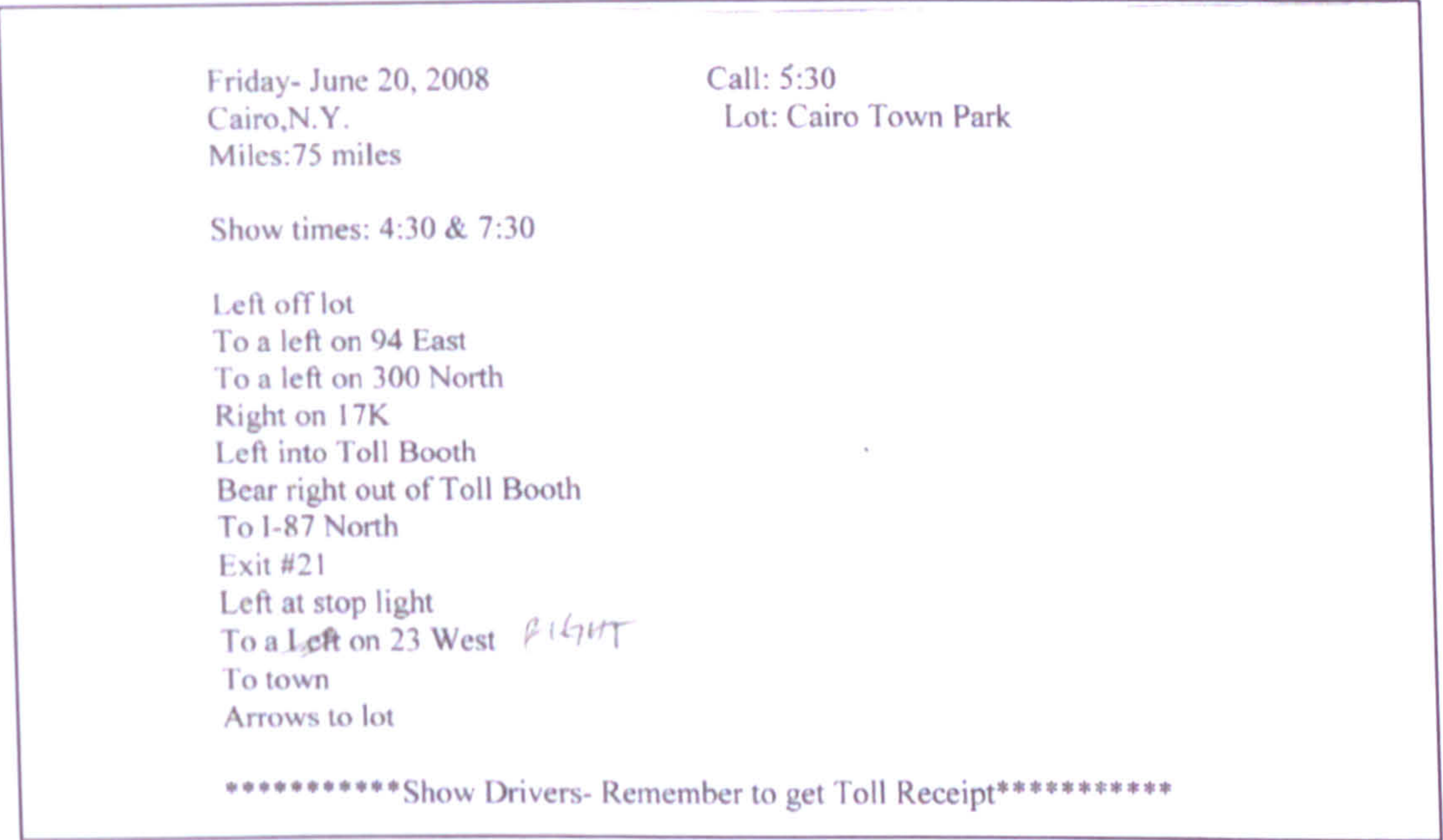


Figure 4.14: This particular route was not able to avoid a toll road. Again, the arrows corrected the slip.

06:30 Washingtonville, New York, heading to Cairo, New York (fig. 4.14)

In the early hours of the morning, drivers on Kelly Miller sometimes find it easier to follow the truck in front than attempt to read a route slip in the dark or spot arrows in the fog (fig. 4.15). The show begins its morning drive in much the same way every morning with particular groups of vehicles leaving together. Over the course of the drive the punctuated convoy re-organizes itself into familiar groupings of three to four vehicles. The convoy becomes a broken or punctuated line of vehicle groupings as

houses stop for fuel or to accomplish quick errands.³⁴ Families follow each other, usually the wife driving the house and the husband driving a show owned vehicle.

Speed and navigation determine groupings as well. Some houses and trucks always drive on their own because they drive too fast, or too slow, or frequently get lost. Each group usually follows the same leader. Following a preferred vehicle can make the morning



Figure 4.15: en route to Greenville, PA on July 27. On a foggy morning, a bright red truck is a better guide than small white arrows.

drive easier but it can create confusion as well.

Last week there was a propane filling station on the way to the lot (fig. 4.11). Usually this kind of service is noted on the bottom of the route slip which should cue drivers to possible unplanned turns of the vehicles in front of them. A motorhome owner remembered the filling station from a past season and passed the information to a few other motorhome drivers. Most houses have detachable tanks and could return later in the day in their trucks, but motorhomes have integrated tanks which means the whole house has to go to the station. Two motorhomes stopped to fill their tanks on the way to the lot knowing that they would probably not be able to manoeuvre their house off the lot once set-up began. A third vehicle, a seat-wagon, began turning into the filling station before the driver realized that it was not a turning on the route. The driver had to wait until the motorhomes finished and pulled through before the seat wagon could continue to the lot.

³⁴ Interestingly, I observed this pattern of groupings twice while I was parked on the side of the road waiting for the Shop Truck at the end of the convoy. This was an instance where a stationary perspective of the road side provided information about the practice of mobility that I would not have observed had I always been in motion with the convoy.

This particular example highlights the flexibility provided by the route slip and the potential confinement of driving in convoy. For all the stability that the route provides, the performance of driving also requires a bit of flexibility. Schechner understands performance as behaviours that are held, or stored, separate from the performer. This separation allows for behaviours to be restored in ways specific to the stage (Schechner 1985). Earlier I discussed how each drive is a restored behaviour altered for the stage on which it is set, the particular route given for the drive. The route slip and arrows ensure that the convoy of vehicles will follow the same path but it also allows for individuals to temporarily turn off the path and then return. The ability to leave and return to the route also allows the vehicles the flexibility to reshuffle into familiar patterns of driving creating a stability of performance between particular drivers. This particular example also highlighted how memory and materials directs the performance of the drive.

A particular route of last week had been driven before and the stage was memorable for a motorhome owner due to his particular pattern of maintenance determined by his house. This memory was passed on to other people that shared a similar pattern of maintenance. The specificity of this stage maintained the general performance of driving but altered it in relation to the specific needs of particular drivers.

The drive could be enacted through the performance of the convoy without aid of route slip and arrows but there would be no opportunity for the necessary flexibility of refuelling or other necessary performances for the maintenance of everyday life, in this case, filling propane tanks which power refrigerators and water heaters. Too much stability in the drive, as in a true convoy of each vehicle having only the one in front as reference, could result in more instances of vehicles blindly following those in front and finding themselves stuck.

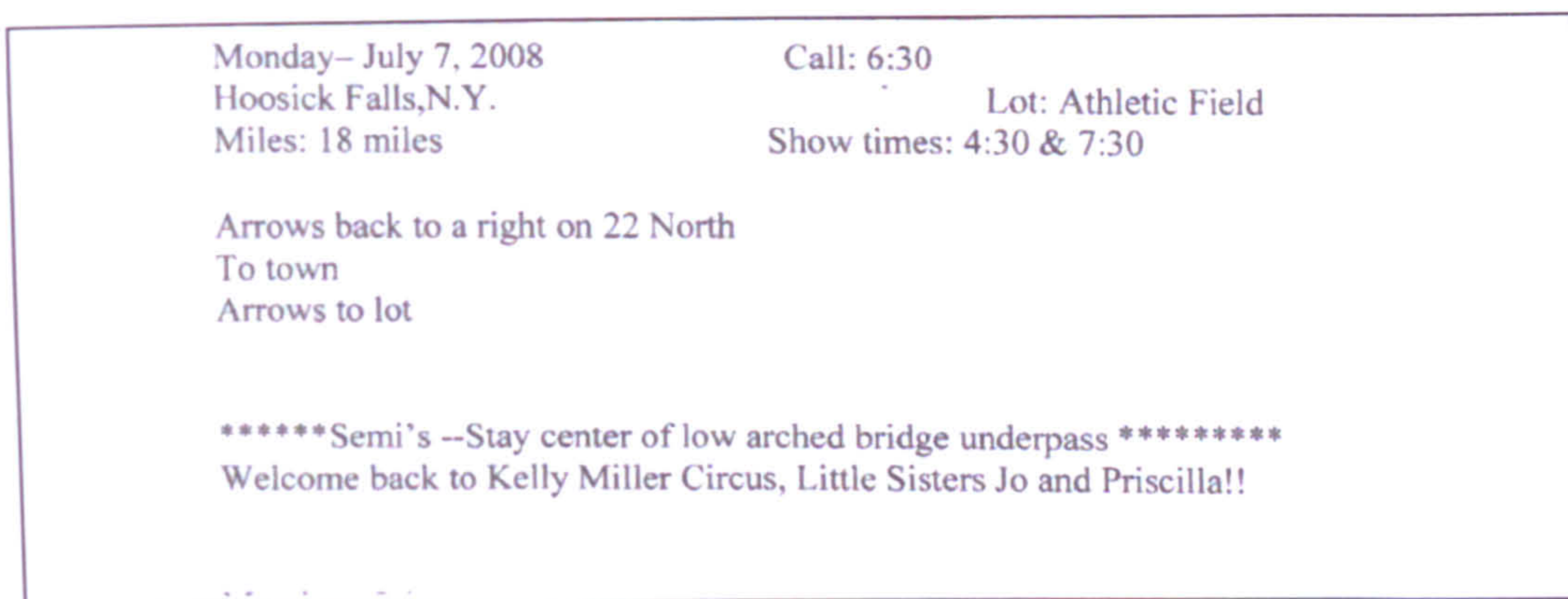


Figure 4.16: Sometimes the arrows do the work and the route slip merely provides advice and information.

07:00 Berlin, New York, heading to Hoosick Falls, New York

The show usually divides its days on two lots. It wakes up in the town it entertained yesterday but spends the majority of its day in the town scheduled for today. Today's first lot in Berlin, New York, is a regular stop around the same time each season. The business is not great and the lot is a bit difficult and out of the way but it gets the show closer to today's second, and main, lot (fig. 4.16). The lot in Hoosick Falls, New York, is a park with a public pool, a great playground, and an ice cream shop around the corner.

*A recognizable characteristic of the Kelly Miller Circus (and many mudshows like it) is its ability to move from town to town. The striking element about this characteristic is just how little time is actually spent driving. The average **jump** is about an hour and a half. Of all the bundles of performances that make up Kelly Miller's ritual of movement, the driving performances can be seen to be the shortest. However, when the preparation for the drive is taken into account, when the performance of the route is considered, of which driving is a small part, then the performance of driving is understood as part of the longest and perhaps most tedious bundle of performances in Kelly Miller's ritual of movement. The performance of the*

route runs through, and ties together, the numerous restorations of mobilizing and demobilizing performances as well as the restoration of driving. It encompasses the performances of booking agents, advance teams, and the 24-Hour Man. This section illustrated the central importance of the performance of driving to the continuation of the Kelly Miller Circus season.

The previous section serves as the centre point of this chapter. It described and discussed how driving performances are produced through the continual work and careful patterning of a specific bundling of performances within the overarching ritual of movement. By using traces of other driving performances in the form of arrows and personal experience, the drive is continual restored to move the show along the route but is also flexible to allow for individual restorations of maintenance. However, the lived aspect of this particular performance of mobility in Kelly Miller Circus also works to erase the performances of mobility as we saw in the case of the route arrows. In the next section, the performance of driving is actively, and continually, 'covered up' or erased through performances of demobilizing even as it directs that performance. This section will describe and discuss the next moment in the ritual of movement while also highlighting the way in which the performance of driving is always present and haunting each moment of the ritual.

Demobilizing

Sunday– July 13, 2008
Norwich,N.Y.
Miles:85 miles

Arrows off lot
Right at stop sign
Right on 10 South
Right on 20 West
Left on 12 South
To town
Arrows to lot

Call: 5:30
Lot: fairgrounds
Show times 2:00 & 5:00

*****NOTE SHOW TIMES*****

Figure 4.17: A long jump and change in show times hint of a tiring day.

07:30

As the Lot Supervisor arrived in Norwich this morning (fig. 4.17), the 24-Hour Man stepped out of his house to explain the justifications for today’s layout indicated by small neon green flags and bright orange Xs spray-painted on to the grass of the fairground. The 24-Hour Man planned how the show would pull onto the field this morning, the Lot Supervisor is concerned with how they will pull off tomorrow morning. The two plans are not always compatible. The orientation of particular vehicles may be altered to create a compromise but the overall spotting of the show is fairly consistent. The midway should be adjacent to the backdoor with the animals on the same side as the bandwagon. Soon the first houses begin to arrive and are directed either onto the field or to the side of the road to wait.

As the first of the semi-trucks arrive, the house trailers are spotted in a seemingly random pattern around a trailer holding a mound of dark blue vinyl. The houses and layout markers indicate to many of the drivers where their truck is headed on the field. However, they cannot proceed to these spots until they are confirmed by either the Lot Supervisor or the 24-Hour Man. As more and more vehicles arrive they

are directed into place simultaneously through gestures by the Lot Supervisor and 24-Hour Man, from across the field and directly in front of a vehicle (fig. 4.18). In the next half hour they may run and walk across this field close to thirty times. Together, the two men slowly begin to build the foundations of the show. As each vehicle takes its position, people, materials, and animals are slowly unloaded. When the Shop Truck finally pulls on an hour after the first house, this corner of the fairgrounds is already covered with colourful vinyl and crisscrossed with heavy black electrical cord (fig. 4.19).



Figure 4.18: Union City, PA on July 25. The wet grass shows the route onto the lot.

The ritual of movement moves on to the performance of demobilizing, of hiding or temporarily forgetting, the inherent mobility of Kelly Miller Circus. The movement of the show onto this 300ft by 300ft piece of grass is directed primarily through the performance of two individuals, the 24-Hour Man and the Lot Supervisor. Their



Figure 4.19: Middlefield, OH on July 29.

performances are cued by past performances through memory and inevitably altered for the context of the day. Individual performances of each driver are created through the

traces of layout markers, bodily gestures of the 24-Hour Man and Lot Supervisor, and their own past performances (Pearson and Shanks 2001). However, in this part of the demobilization performance, the two men directing the action have the ability to alter each individual's restored performances. They must confirm and acknowledge each driver's move before a house or semi truck can pull into its spot. They may have some information the driver does not which will cue a different performance than the driver assumes. Perhaps the ground in a vehicle's usual spot is too soft, maybe there is an underground pipe or cable that must be avoided. Here, through the forced 'forgetting' of the driver's experience, a bundle of mobility performances are tightly directed but also flexible. In some discussions of automobility it is suggested that the freedom of the automobile comes from being able to drive to any location but that there must be a place to park (Henderson 2009, p83). In a way, parking creates the freedom of driving and not being able to park creates chaos. As we will see in this section, sometimes the ability and act of parking can frequently create a feeling of immobility and erase the performance of driving.

The performance of demobilizing began even as Kelly Miller was performing mobilization. The lot layout for Norwich was created yesterday while the show was packing up on the previous lot. Before the first vehicle is spotted, the Lot Supervisor is already thinking about how to mobilize the show the following day. While addressing the performances of mobilization and demobilization separately, they have been shown to be, in practice, intertwined and constantly informing each other. Even as they demobilize for the day and erase, to some degree, their continual driving performance with colour and music, the show is still performing its mobility through the work of the 24-Hour Man setting the route to the next lot and the unpacking and assembling of the shows materials for the day.

The flexibility of the layout and pulling on performance ensures that Kelly Miller Circus will appear relatively the same as it did yesterday, and as it will tomorrow, but always slightly different. In doing so, the performances of mobilization must be incorporated into the demobilizing performance of the layout for Norwich, New York. The creation of Kelly Miller Circus on this lot hides the traces of mobility while it also prepares for the evening act of mobilization and by doing so, produces a recognizable, stable, ritual of movement. Again, the specificity of each restoration of performance bundles maintains the overall ritual of movement.

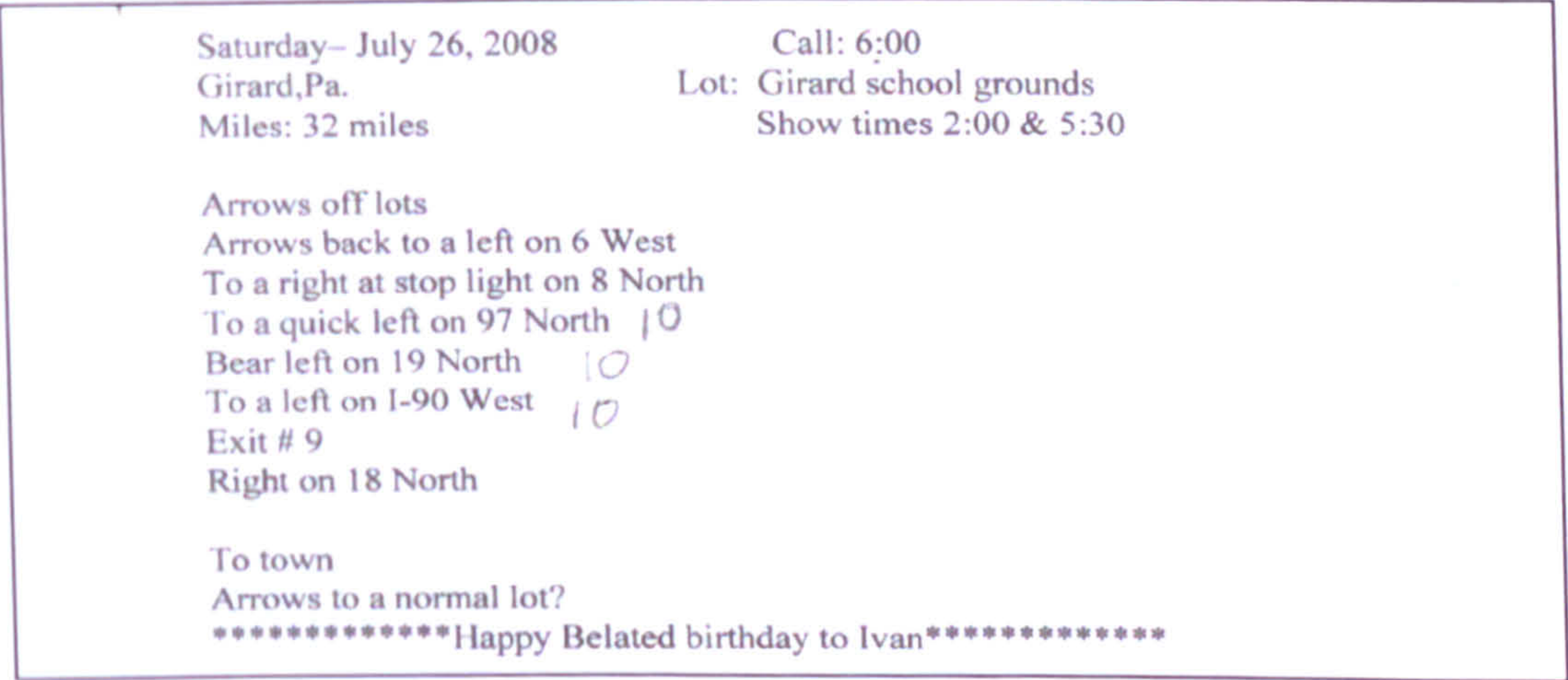


Figure 4.20: A series of unusual and difficult layouts is reflected in the final direction. Again, the miles for each direction were noted the night before driving.

07:30

Today Kelly Miller is a fundraiser for the Dan Rice Festival Committee. Dan Rice (1823-1900) is a legend of the American circus tradition. Among other things, he is credited with creating the look of the American iconic figure of Uncle Sam. Although this myth has been disproved by his biographer (Carlyon 2001) it is still widely believed within the circus community and this town of Girard which served as the winterquarters for his first circus (fig. 4.20). This is a town familiar with circus and a crowd has already formed as Kelly Miller arrives. The first houses are spotted and the occupants immediately begin the next moment of the ritual of movement. Boards are pulled out

and set in place. Satellite dishes are the next item out and around the lot hunched figures are attempting to tune in a signal. Depending on their spotting, the surrounding landscape, and the length of their cable, they may or may not be successful. Colourful vinyl is unfolded and animals are unloaded and moved into shade for their breakfast. Shoes, bikes, toys, and an occasional costume piece or prop litter the ground around the houses. Large props are slowly erected as bits and pieces emerge from storage areas. Meanwhile, the pounding of the mechanical stake driver provides a kind of rhythm and soundtrack for the morning (fig. 4.21). The tent poles are laid out following the paint markings on the ground and the tent unfolded over them (fig. 4.22). There is a lull in activity as the pieces of vinyl are laced together. The Mechanic arrives on the lot and immediately begins to walk the lot with a large container of oil, a rag, and a funnel in one hand, and what appears to be a piece of wood banister in the other. He taps each tire of the show vehicles with the wooden rod, checking tire pressure and making mental notes about any vehicle repairs.

The tent goes up at 09:00 when the generator roars to life. As soon as the first **quarter poles** are up,

coils of black cord are brought in and laid down. As the last centre pole is pulled into position, the first seat wagon is directed into the tent and the ringcurb is positioned.

Unpacking will continue

throughout the day. Props move into the tent and rigging goes up and down as acts



Figure 4.21: Hugo, OK on March 13. The mechanical stake driver pounds stakes around the circumference of the tent. This drive is considered when determining the layout of the lot.

rehearse. Showtime approaches and costume and make-up are pulled out of closets and drawers, and animal harnesses are unloaded and dusted off. During the first show props are unpacked as needed. At intermission, around 15:00, the last prop is unloaded as the **elephant tubs** are rolled into the tent. Outside the tent and beyond the midway, vehicle repairs are in progress that will carry on through the ticketed performance and into the evening teardown.



Figure 4.22: Lima, NY on July 17. Note the seat wagons parked in a line to be driven into the tent once it is raised.

*The performance of demobilizing also incorporates the first performances of the evening mobilization. The Mechanic's first acts on completion of the drive are to check the effects of the drive and prepare for the next. His individual performance is one almost completely dedicated to the performance of mobilization. But he is not the only one concerned with the ability to move off the lot. As the performance of demobilizing begins on the lot and continues through most of the day, the traces of Kelly Miller Circus' performances of mobility are disguised and for some, individual opportunities for movement are also limited. Frequently, for many in the **backyard**, once the performance of demobilization begins, vehicles are trapped on the lot until the mobilizing performances are completed in the evening. I rarely had the ability to pull my house off the lot once spotted (and rarely wanted to as it meant packing the house up again). The first thing I did as I waited to be spotted in the morning was check for*

mobile service. The ability to call others on the lot, especially in bad weather, was crucial for accomplishing daily activities of laundry or food shopping.

The potential ability to move and live anywhere that is provided by the materials of the houses and show does not guarantee the freedom to move or live anywhere. The context of the movement and its relation to the 'mobile materials' on the lot is crucial to understanding the mobility performances of Kelly Miller Circus. The presence of satellite dishes, mobile phones, laptops with wireless internet, house trailers, and trucks does not ensure the continuing performances of mobility when stuck in the mud in a field in the middle of Pennsylvania or a mountaintop in West Virginia. This chapter, and thesis, illustrate that it is the lived relationships between the materials, memories, and experiences of the people of Kelly Miller that produce the continuing ritual of movement. The subtle differences of each restoration provide the necessary flexibility to each bundle of performances to, together, be continually recognized as a stable ritual of movement for Kelly Miller Circus' 2008 season. The act of continually restoring the bundle of demobilizing performances enables the Lot Supervisor to arrange the lot in such a way that will prepare for the day's ticketed performances as well as the evening's mobilization. It is the performances of mobility, more than the materials of mobility, that work to stabilize and maintain the ritual of movement and in that way produce a performance of stable mobility.

Conclusion: Just one day

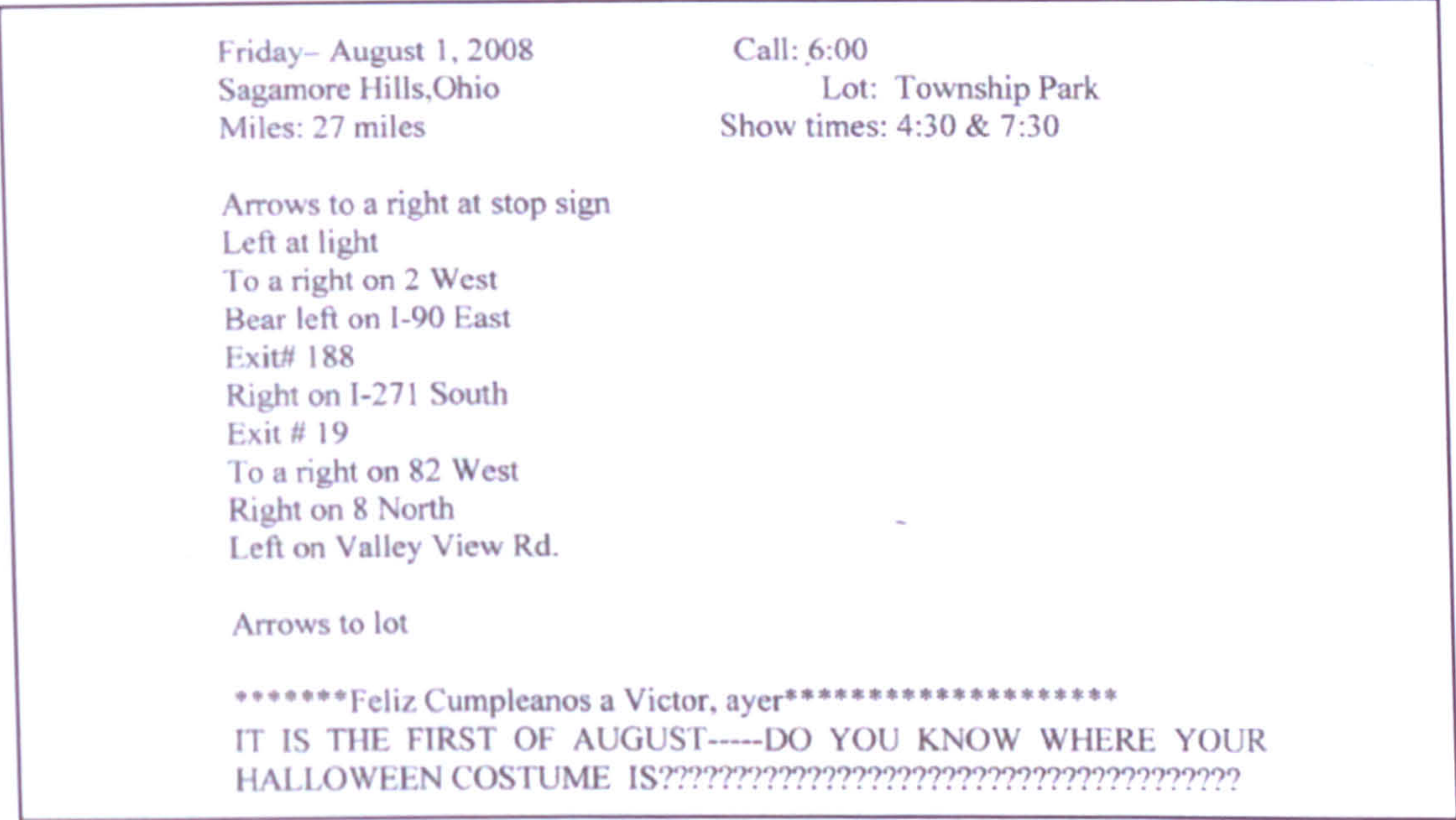


Figure 4.23: The Halloween Party marks the traditional end to the season. Reminding the show about the party also reminds them that they are on the ‘back end’ of the route. This cues preparations for the following season.

18:30

The first show just ended. In thirty minutes the doors will open and it will be the beginning of the end, again (fig. 4.23). But today will end in a different, although increasingly usual, way. A storm is predicted overnight and the sloping lot will be very dangerous in the mud. The show will pack down as usual but then will pull off after the last show and spend the night in a nearby parking lot. As the first raindrops fall, the rush to get off the sloping field begins. There is a different order to pulling off when it is performed in the evening. The larger semi-trucks go first and then the smaller vehicles are parked in front of them. This allows for the usual morning pull off order. The houses cannot move until the tent is down and the stakes pulled which allows the semi-trucks to move. Despite this delay, there is a frenzy of activity around some houses. The houses without teardown responsibilities are ready to go. The satellite dish is packed, the truck is hitched up, and the engine running, waiting. Other houses,

knowing it will be awhile until there is a clear path, are enjoying their evening meal and TV amidst the frantic activity outside.

As is also usual, this evening manoeuvre is conducted in the rain and mostly dark. Floodlights illuminate the tent and midway teardown but the backyard is left in shadows. As houses prepare to leave, beams of light shine out from headlights illuminating the slick grass. The ground has not turned to mud yet, but before the last house pulls off it is inevitable that at least one vehicle in particular will be towed out of the mud. By midnight the storm has arrived and the last few houses are still being pulled out of the mud and set for the morning drive.

The perpetual packing and unpacking, mobilizing and demobilizing, will continue day after day in much the same way as if the entire season was just one day gone over again and again. The ritual of movement is restored everyday in such a way that the subtle differences of each day are forgotten to the ritual of 'Just One Day.' However, the subtle differences are also remembered in each restoration of the ritual providing flexibility and specificity to each bundle of performances. In this way, each performance within the ritual of movement is no longer merely a restored behaviour, but a reaffirmed performance, as it is restored to the ritual, in much the same way, again and again. There are many possible relationships between people, materials, and memory on the Kelly Miller lot, but not all are cemented in place by inclusion into the ritual of movement which sustains the place of Kelly Miller Circus. By viewing the routine of movement in Kelly Miller Circus as a ritual, the continual restoration and variation of the performance is stabilized as a known pattern of performance maintained through its continual restoration. The variation within the ritual is inevitable due to the constantly changing stage for the performances (Roach 1996a) but is also necessary for the survival of the ritual. The traces of movement used to restore the performance of mobility in Kelly Miller Circus are subject to interpretation and each resulting

performance is marked by the interpretation (Pearson and Shanks 2001). However, each interpretation is still recognized as a ritual of movement unique to Kelly Miller Circus and its people, materials, and animals. In this way the details of each day's ritual of movement are blurred into 'just one day' (fig. 4.24).

The phrase, 'just one day,' highlights the repetition of the performances of mobility in Kelly Miller Circus but also serves as a coping mechanism within those performances.



Figure 4.24: East Providence, RI on June 29. This photo offers no clue as to the town in which it takes place, but the moment of demobilizing within the ritual of movement is evident based on the arrangement of materials.

Photo by Peter Erceg.

Particularly

challenging days full of mud, rain, or 'bad' spotting are met with "It's just one day."

What Kelly Miller Circus means by this is that these days can and will be dealt with because these particular circumstances will only last one day. Tomorrow the show will move to the next town and new circumstances. Again, the driving performance directs even the coping mechanisms. The show will continue to drive and so will move away from these conditions. However, in the 2008 season, "It's just one day" was heard almost daily. The experience and related performances of mud, rain, and spotting soon became regularly restored performances within the overall ritual of movement.

This chapter presented descriptions of the lived relationships between the people, materials, and memory of Kelly Miller Circus that make-up and stabilize its ritual of movement. It also discussed how, throughout the season, the acts of

mobilization, driving, and demobilization are continually restored in such a way as to be specific to each time and place as well as maintain known patterns of the overarching mobility performance of the ritual. Each day, the bundles of performance work to 'remember' and 'forget' the differences of the day before in order to continue the pattern and maintain the overarching performance of 'the route.' The continual restoration of the ritual of movement and its related bundles of performance works to not only stabilize the mobile situation of Kelly Miller Circus, but also to cement, or reaffirm, particular performances as necessary for the constant renewal of the ritual of movement. For example, the flexibility offered to the performance of the drive by the combination of arrows and route slips allows for the maintenance of the route as well as individual performances of home maintenance.

Approaching the continually restored behaviours of each bundle of performances as reaffirmed performances presents stability to the pattern of performance which works to keep Kelly Miller Circus driving from town to town. It also allows for a flexibility in the pattern of performances by fixing particular performances to particular circumstances within the season. For instance, the performance of pulling off in the evening is not necessarily a regular performance in the ritual of movement but its place in the pattern is restored and reaffirmed when the circumstances of a sloping lot and storm present a recognizable stage for the performance of evening pull off.

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, viewing the ritual of movement as it happens over just one day can work to forget, or erase, the specificity of the conditions that direct each performance within the ritual. Viewing each bundle of restored, or reaffirmed, ritual over the course of nine days reveals how the movement ritual of 'Just One Day' is restored slightly different each time in the routine of each day, yet retains its recognizability. The daily ritual is shown to be stabilized by the specific traces that

inform the performances within that day. The process of restoring behaviours of movement as each day demands presents the work of performance and memory, in the form of reaffirmed performances, as continually present in the maintenance of Kelly Miller's specific form of mobility. The mobility process of reaffirming performances illustrates how a continual situation of mobility is maintained while also highlighting how that recognizability of situation and stable work is flexible depending on the locational context of the show.

This chapter concentrated on the event of driving as a key performance that directs the way in which the ritual of movement is restored daily. The next chapter looks at how the ticketed performance also directs the ritual in conjunction with the drive. While this chapter presented a journal of movement, Chapter 6 presents a script of movement in which each character describes and explains their movements around the lot during a two day stand. In this way, the chapter discusses how each performance, or practice and experience, of movement is produced through cues provided within the ritual described here in Chapter 4. By describing what happens to each performance of movement when particular moments within the ritual are skipped or reshuffled as the show becomes, and remains, immobile for two days, the next chapter discusses the importance of Kelly Miller's processes of mobilization to the production and maintenance of a recognizably stable situation.

Chapter 5

Setting the Stage

Narrator: Kelly Miller Circus performs in many ways, on many stages, throughout the day. This chapter looks at how performances within the ritual of movement are dependent upon the processes of mobilization and demobilization for their restoration. The idea of the stage is introduced as a way to incorporate the production and continuation of each performance into the daily restoration of the ritual of movement described in Chapter 4. The idea of the stage also attends to the specificity of the restoration of each day. Where the last chapter centred its discussion on the performance of the drive (and route), this chapter centres on the performances in and around the tent during a two day stand when the usual performance of the drive is taken out of the daily ritual. Here, the performances of the ring are shown to be the point at which the processes of demobilization and mobilization intersect in carefully choreographed patterns. By focusing on the stages produced through the related processes of mobilization and demobilization, this chapter highlights the particular importance of the performances of mobilization to the stability of Kelly Miller Circus' many stages and restored performances.

To evoke and illuminate the variety of performances and the production of each performance on the Kelly Miller lot, the chapter is structured as a script of movement with each character describing and explaining their movements around the lot to the reader. In this way, the chapter illustrates, as well as discusses, the ways in which moments within the ritual of movement produce stages which cue particular performances and the effects to those stages and performances when moments are left out of the ritual. The script is set over

three days, each ending with a gathering of characters referred to as the Ensemble, although it does not include every character. As discussed in Chapter 2, the characters were created through a combination of observation, interviews, and experience. The characters represented do not necessarily stand in for the people holding the same role during the 2008 season of Kelly Miller Circus. As stated in Chapter 3, each member of the Kelly Miller show has performed many roles in their circus life and many people's experiences went into the creation of each character (even the **First of May**). Exact quotes are noted, however they are not always from the person holding that role in 2008, as they can stem from discussions about prior roles or experience. The lot which serves as the overarching stage for this script was created primarily by combining the experience and context of four lots; Greenwood, AR on April 7, Nashville, IN on May 2, West Friendship, MD on May 30-31, and Shrewsbury, PA on June 4. The Narrator and Researcher interrupt occasionally to provide context and analysis.

ENSEMBLE: *The house of Animal Training Family. Evening. Light rain. The house has recently been pulled off a muddy lot to a nearby parking lot. The Family has guests. Two pairs of mud boots sit just inside the door. First of May and Aerialist have stopped over after their houses were pulled from the muddy lot. It is 23:30, the call is 5:30. The days have been difficult, wet and cold and full of mud and early mornings, but they get together for 'cocktails' almost every night. A photo album is open on the kitchen table. Animal Trainer Husband was showing First of May pictures from the family's career and telling stories of the great, and mediocre, acts of their past. Animal Trainer Wife returns from the back with a heat patch for First of May's strained arm. Wife and Aerialist offer*

advice on the injury and the aerial training that caused the strain. The group makes plans for the next town because they are staying for two days. They have been looking forward to this town and a break from 'driving'³⁵ for three weeks. They hope for sunny weather and good spotting.

Show before the Show

24 Hour Man: "When it comes to laying out the tent, you try and get the center ring as level as possible, preferably on grass with the animals on grass. Those are the two main things. You don't want to go from solid to soft in the ring. I don't want an animal or someone to break a leg. First thing is tent placement and your midway. This is mostly determined by terrain and size of the lot. You gotta be able to see this in your mind. You gotta be able to look at it and see the whole picture."

Lot Super: It's a good lot. Big and flat, fairly hard. Near the school, "lots of foot traffic, the best kind of lot. They can be tight and difficult, but foot traffic means good show and take." Why is the audience coming through the backyard?

24 Hour Man: There is a slight chance of rain, so everything is facing the road. But the ring is on the solid. You can't have it right every day.

Lot Super: Today we could. But it is too late, here come the houses.

Animal Trainer Husband: We need to be spotted to the right of the bandwagon so the tiger cages can roll directly into the tent from the truck. I set up the barriers around the house and truck first. Then put up the tent for shade. By the time the

³⁵ In this context driving refers to not only the act of moving between towns, but the related acts of packing and unpacking as well.

crowd gets bored with the tent raising and starts roaming around, the practice arena will be up and provide another obstacle. That is also a good time for some cat exercise (fig. 5.1).

Animal Trainer Wife: He starts outside while I make breakfast and get our daughter ready for school. She's still asleep in the truck so there's time for the usual quick tidy of the



Figure 5.1: Decatur, IN on May 9.

house from the drive before making a quick breakfast and unloading the dogs. After I walk her to school I will set up the rest of the compound and prepare for our usual brunch (fig. 5.2).

First of May: The stake truck wakes me from my quick morning nap and signals an hour to **lights**. The crowds are already swarming through the backyard and peeking through the windows of the house so it seems a good time to set up the buffer of my front porch. It's a good day to air out the house and damp towels from last week's leaks. Just in



Figure 5.2: Reistertown, MD on May 29.

time to head over to brunch at Animal Trainers' house.

Local School Teacher: The bright circus trucks parading down the street in front of the school are a distraction for the students. We will walk over to the circus later this morning to watch the tent go up and look at the animals.

Circus School Teacher: It's already a bit stuffy in the cookhouse tent this morning. The tent is going up behind us. We are next to a school today and the lines of students are loud and distracting to our students. We all know that the cook tent is off limits until 11:00 for school, but the crowd doesn't think anything is off limits. The tent will have to stay stuffy. I don't want to roll up the sidewalls and invite in the wandering crowds.

Researcher: *The opening scene is set in perhaps the most common and extensive stage on the Kelly Miller lot, the house. For the families of the show, the house is a self-contained unit holding all the usual private performances of a home, from eating to sleeping to bathing, as well as more public performances of entertaining guests. For others, the private spaces of the home may be spread across the lot, between a bunk, the cookhouse, the Generator Truck and the donnikers depending on how the performances of demobilization are conducted each day. The house illustrates the idea of the stage utilized in this chapter. Here, a stage is understood as a designated space for particular performances, much like Goffman's idea of regions or settings (Goffman 1959), but it is also understood as a performance in itself, a performance of production which happen in bundles or stages.*

"Bodies not only move in, but generate, spaces produced by and through their movements" (Pearson and Shanks 2001, p24). Considering the idea of stage utilized in this chapter and the idea of reaffirmed performances developed in Chapter 4, perhaps this statement from Pearson and Shanks could be read,

'Bodies not only move in, but generate, stages produced by and through their movements and memories.' The performance of the 'layout' by the 24-Hour Man and Lot Supervisor revolves around the production of the larger stage of the lot as well as the individual stages of houses. It also demonstrates how the traces of experience and weather create two different views of the lot based on individual interpretation and interest (Pearson 2006, p55; Pearson and Shanks 2001, p6). Both men are concerned with getting the show on the lot now and off again the next morning, but it appears that they had different ideas of how the stage could be set to account for rain and deal with both concerns. The staging of the houses shows how the performances of home and demobilization are informed by familiar traces. One such trace is the repetitive sound of the stake driver which also notes the progress of the demobilization performance. Another is the familiar, yet specific, presence of an audience, in the form of the gathering crowd of townspeople.

The bundle of demobilization performances is produced by the performances of mobilization and the drive and is produced on the stage created through the 'layout.' Each of the stages in this opening scene, the house, the lot, the cookhouse classroom, illustrate how the daily moment of demobilizing is restored and produces a varied of stages for 'display.' In fact, the show encourages the morning crowds by advertising their arrival and inviting local schools and nurseries to come watch the animals unloaded and the tent raised in the traditional way by an elephant.³⁶ The performance of 'life on the road' that takes place in each house is an additional attraction and the people of Kelly Miller are well aware of their morning performances.

³⁶ Refer to Appendix 2 for additional materials and artefacts consulted.

Tent: Last night I was wet, muddy, cold and lashed to a trailer in a parking lot. This morning I am unfolded on a dry, grassy field. I am unfolded and stretched over poles, and the muddy clouds covering the stars on my belly are wiped away. I wake to the laughs and smiles of the crew. In the morning they are the stars of the circus, performing feats of extraordinary skill caught in the audiences' camera lens.

Tent Boss: The unfolded vinyl is tied off to the stakes. Beneath it are the poles and the blocks and wires that secure the tent, and the folded sidewalls. When the **plant** goes on at 09:00 we begin to raise the tent starting in front of the generator truck to the right of the marquee and working clockwise. This gives the crowd a good view, and photos, of the action. The first **quarter**



Figure 5.3: Sweden, NY on July 18.



Figure 5.4: Sweden, NY on July 18.

pole goes up in front of the midway and the crowd can move in under the tent to watch us and Lisa [an elephant] raise the tent. They also get to see the first lights and cords and blocks laid out and hung (fig. 5.3, 5.4, 5.5).

Office Manager: That's the generator and the ticket windows are open for the gathering crowd. Building and fire inspectors are coming today so, in addition to today's

file of permits, I also pull the tent blueprints. I sort the mail we picked up at the last town under 'General Delivery' while I wait for the sponsor to arrive.

Animal Groom: Lisa returns from raising the tent. She gets a reward and it's bath time for the elephants. The baths are done out of the enclosure



Figure 5.5: Plainville, MA on June 28.

Photo by Peter Erceg.

so the ground doesn't become a mud pit, but also so the crowd can watch. I like to let the girls wander a bit to dry. If they are under the awning in the department, dust and hay sticks to their wet skin. The animal department isn't as secure as we would like today so they have to stand just inside the enclosure at the back where it is sunny (fig. 5.6).

Researcher: The

choreography of the morning performances is produced with an eye to maintaining audience interest as well as getting the work done as



Figure 5.6: Plainville, MA on June 28.

Photo by Peter Erceg.

evidenced by Tent Boss' description. The morning staging production also highlights the 'behind the scene' staging performances of permits, daily

inspections, and mail collection that are somewhat invisible but vital to the show going on around the road office. This stage of permits and inspections hints at the complicated and sprawling system of stable and mobile networks that work to keep the show on the road, the 'moorings' that give Kelly Miller Circus numerous pushing off points (Urry 2003). However, I am more interested in how these stages maintain the mobility performances of the show than how they 'tie' the show to stationary points. The use of stages in this chapter takes into account the multiple traces involved in the restoration of mobility performances and views the stationary points of each town as stages on which the performances of mobility take place. Each stage presents the opportunity to restore and maintain the daily ritual of movement.

Local School Teacher: The students' favourite parts of the morning were watching the tigers playing in their pen and the elephant bath. They didn't have the patience to watch the tent go up when there is so much else going on. But they did notice that it was on the ground and then done, all of sudden, to them. We have only been here for 30 minutes and it seems everything is done. They even opened up the animal rides as we left.

Researcher: *Each performance of staging in the demobilizing performance, when watched exclusively, is quite time consuming and even boring. They are not necessarily done in a flurry of rushed movement, as it seemed in Chapter 4 when lumped together, but as a calculated ritual restoration. As with the 'stable' in stable mobility, ritual does not mean static or fixed, but repeated. "The ritual is in the format...not in the content as such. The format insures that certain contents, certain classes of events will be repeated; and repetition is a main quality of ritual" (Schechner 1985, p315). Throughout this opening scene*

the ritual of movement is maintained through the repetition of particular performances like the spotting and staging of the show on the lot, the staging of the houses and tent for the crowd, and the collecting of mail at post offices and by individuals. However, each of these performances is also altered in their restoration. The format of the ritual of movement remains the same but the content is altered based on the stage of the day. The stage presents an opportunity to restore and rework particular behaviours and, in so doing, reaffirm their place in the ritual.

Narrator: The 'show before the show' is the staging performances preceding the ticketed performance in the ring. This show presents the idea of staging as a way to look at the production, or process, of the demobilizing moment within the daily ritual. The stage creates a way to look at stationary moorings from a mobile perspective and see them as a method of maintaining mobility performances as opposed to tying them to a network. This is not to suggest that the mobility performances of Kelly Miller Circus flow freely between stages with no connection or consequence. More that they use the context of each stage to inform and reaffirm the performances of mobility, much like site-specific theatrical performances which are conditioned, from conception to interpretation, by the particulars of the site (Pearson and Shanks 2001, p23, 146). Looking at the staging of Kelly Miller's performances of demobilizing reveals how behaviours are altered in restoration due to the stage on which they are performed. The chapter goes on to show how particular stages within Kelly Miller mark the end of one performance while simultaneously enabling other performances.

The Main Stage

Tent: I can finally breathe. Raised high above the ground with my walls rolled up, the air beneath me is cool. As my suit of stripes raised above the lot an amphitheatre with a bright red circle in its middle formed beneath me. Lights and aerial rigging hang from my skeleton. The only illumination comes from outside; streaming through the holes in my skin and seeping through my rolled up sides. Now I rest while lunch is served in the cookhouse. I breathe gently in the wind (fig. 5.7).

Ringmaster: The lights can go a long way to making a show. “You can actually

create magic with the

lighting.” Every day

I check the lights

before they go up.

“On a bumpy road

they come

unplugged. Here we

are pretty flat, but

yesterday...Once they

are hung, suddenly they are aimed in the audience’s eyes or on the back corner.”

It is a never-ending chore, but one that makes all the difference.

Musician: Every few days we check the sound in the tent. Yesterday we were on asphalt, today we are on grass. It makes a difference to the sound. Yesterday it echoed. Today it will be muffled. The size of the crowd affects the sound as well. It can echo in the morning and be muffled in the evening. Muffled is much better.

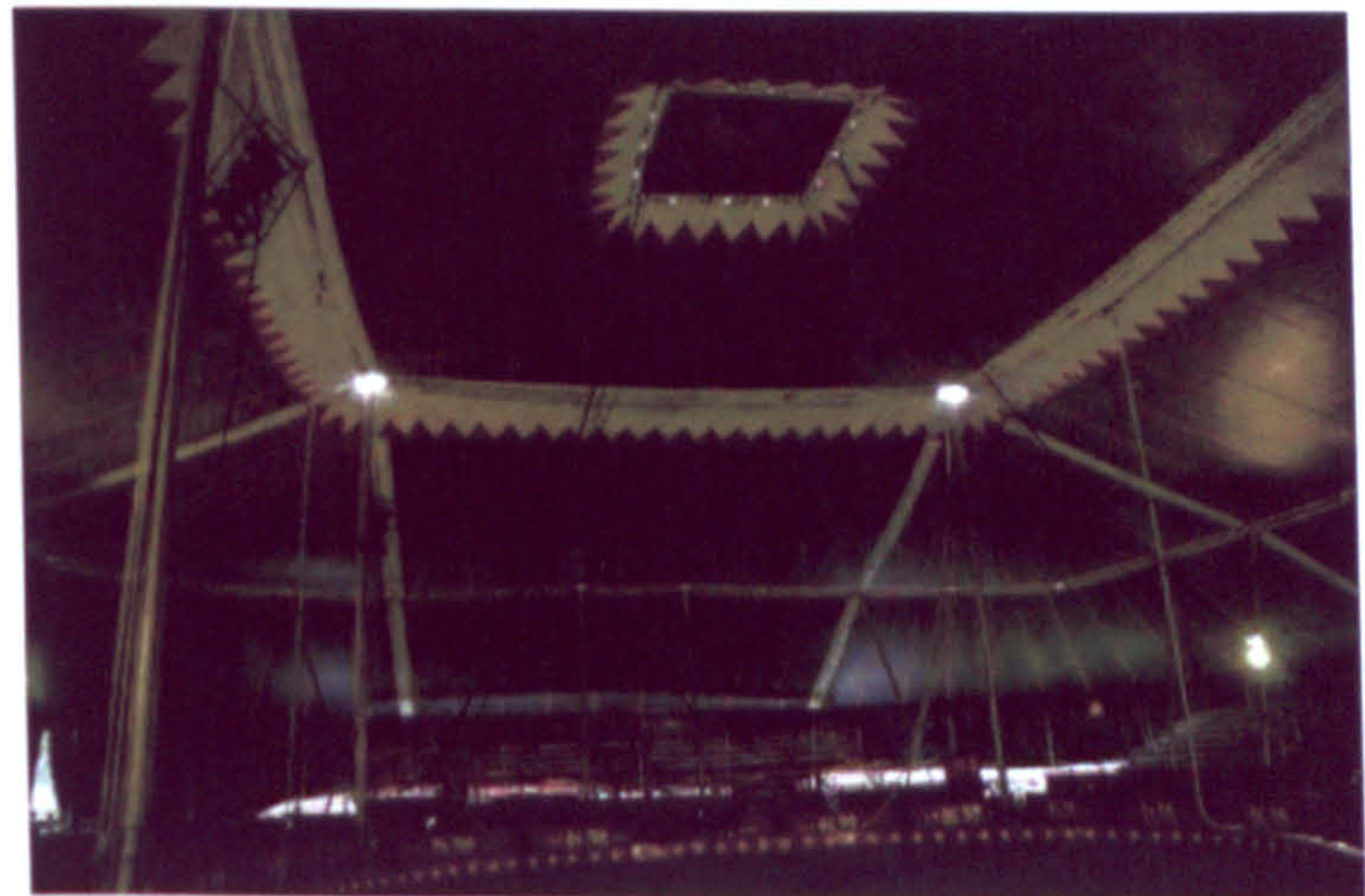


Figure 5.7: Middleboro, MA on June 26.

Photo by Peter Erceg.

First of May: The sun and dry grass is welcome. Usually the lot is a ghost town during the day, but today most people found a reason to be outside and enjoying the break from the rain. Houses and linens are aired. Costumes hung out to dry after a wash in a bucket. Those who can practice out of the tent are taking advantage of the good weather (fig. 5.8).

Juggler: I have to practice every day. Performing twice a day is practice for performance elements like the **styling** and timing, but it is not enough. Missing one day of practice will affect the performance. “You have to keep it in your arms.”

Aerialist: “I can’t perform what I haven’t practiced.” I may be able to do a trick by itself but in the sequence of the act, in the heat of performance, it isn’t safe to do something new without practicing it over and over. “When I begin, it is small, almost boring, strength exercises. When I rehearse I hold the trick longer than in the show.



Figure 5.8: Frisco, TX on March 21.

I have to know I can do it. My strength is my safety.”

Tent: I warm with people moving in and out in preparation for the shows. They rehearse. They check and set their props while the smell of crushed grass, spun sugar, sweat, and diesel fuel begins to fill me. The tiger arena is erected at the back of the ring and the cats are rehearsed and trained. New behaviours are added to the act as the season and training go on. As showtime approaches the lights are turned on and the central circle glows in anticipation.

Prop Boss: The **ring mat** is down for rehearsal. It is muddy from yesterday. I mop it every day. “Sometimes it seems pointless, but it is pride.” It must be done just before the audience comes in. This gives little time for a quick shower and changing into uniform (fig. 5.9).

Tent Boss: “We are a mudshow, but that doesn’t mean we present mud to the public.” Dust and mud from

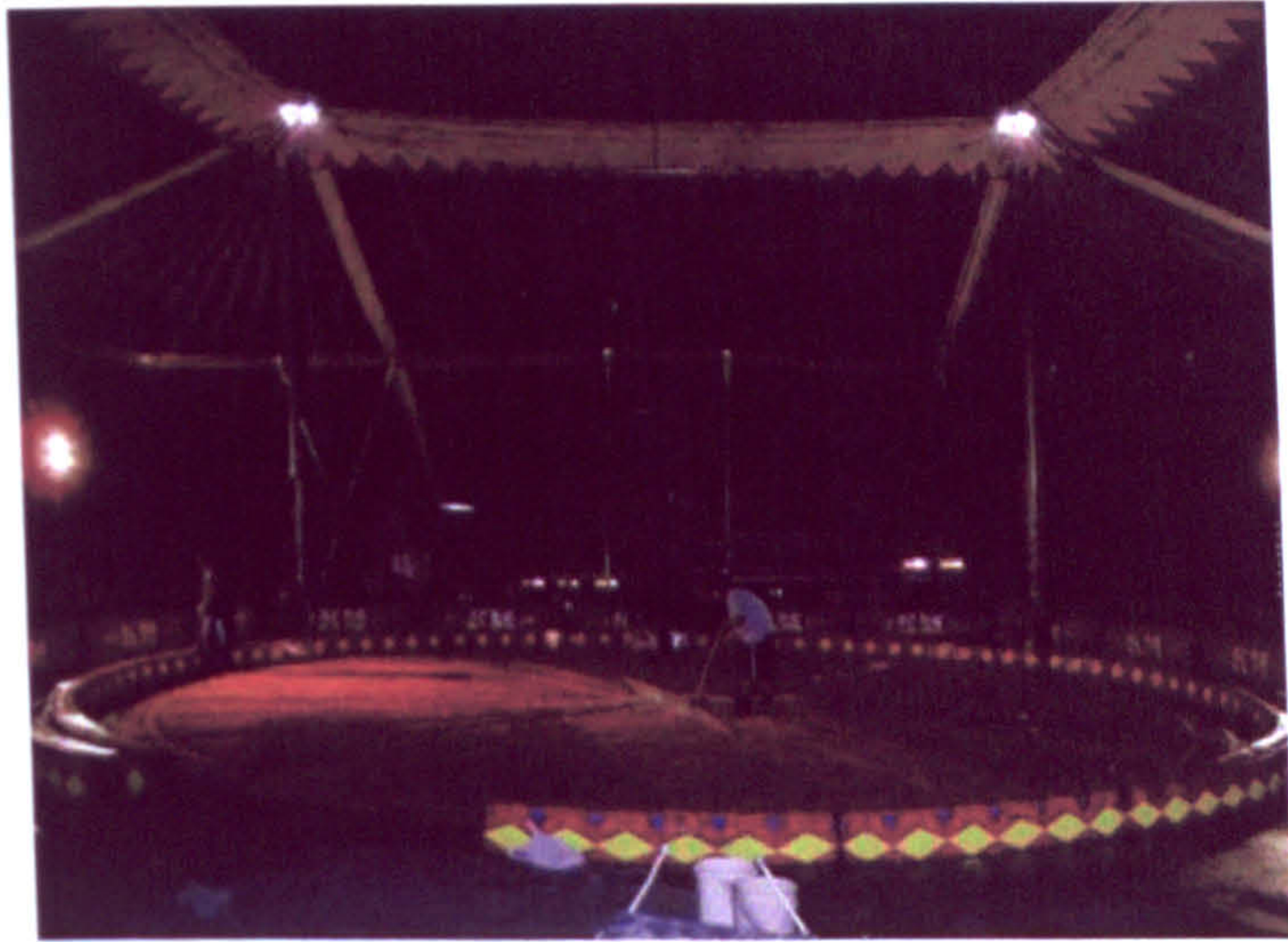


Figure 5.9: Ashdown, AR on April 2.

yesterday’s lot are

wiped from the bleachers and preferred seats just before the show begins. I do this just before the crowds are let in. When the doors open, I have other jobs to do.

Concession Manager: The midway corralled the crowd this morning, but now it is the first glimpse of the show with animal rides, the snake show, and the toy stand filled with colourful balloons and souvenirs. And of course the food, ready and waiting.

Researcher: The completed tent cues and enables another set of staging performances. Some of these performances are acts of maintaining the materials of the show and preparing them for today’s conditions. Other preparations are of the body maintaining and altering the skills of an act. For the Aerialist performing each day twice a day is enough to maintain her act but not enough to improve her skill. For the Juggler, the daily performances are not enough and extra rehearsal is required just to maintain the act, let alone

improve it. These rehearsals reveal the muscles of the body to be repositories for behaviour traces as well as stages for performance. "Certain movements have been selected, simplified and re-energised..." (Pearson and Shanks 2001, p16). These particular movements are selected and focused and restored until the performers are sure that their bodies are able to perform. "In the present, [performance] is experienced as muscular engagement but it also involves retentions from the past, as experience and memory and projections for the future" (Pearson 2006, p219). The selection of behaviour is also reflected in the tigers' rehearsal of specific behaviours which make up their performance. "This process of collecting and discarding, or selecting, organizing, and showing, is what rehearsals are all about" (Schechner 1985, p120).

The stage of the tent enables the Aerialist to restore and reaffirm her behaviours on the trapeze which can only be rigged once the tent is complete. There is a sense of constant upkeep and maintenance in these preparations, from rehearsing particular acts, to resetting the lights and music volume, to the continual cleaning of the ring mat. Even the performances of the ring are not the culmination of rehearsal but serve as rehearsal and maintenance for future performances and new tricks. However, as we will see for another performer, staging performance can be cued by a borrowed costume and a story instead of a bodily trace or personal experience.

The main stage of the tent also serves as a cue for a change in performance in the overall show. The restoration of behaviour begins to incorporate staging for the ticketed performance into the performances of demobilization. The ring mat is unfolded completely but also cleaned. The men who starred in the morning's

performance of demobilization now prepare to melt into the background, while the stars of the ring prepare for the spotlight.

First of May: I can hear the gathering crowd above the roar of the generator. The music begins as I finish my shower. I'm working in the show today for the first time. Rider Wife is on vacation for the next two weeks and I'm covering. She is still here, just not performing. With her borrowed costume I am ready early. Normally I would pass the time chatting at the backdoor but that doesn't work for this new job. I am supposed to be a member of the audience. This is part of the role, which is why most showgirls can't do it, they are too memorable. Or that is what I was told when I got the job.

Animal Trainer Wife: No mud costume today. The shining sun will make everything a bit easier. My favourite costume and clean animals. Smiles and sequins can make everything a bit more fantastic but it is harder work when they are flecked with mud.

Local School Teacher: The tent is dim compared to the sunlight outside. As our eyes adjust to the light, there is a lot to see. In the ring is a large black cage and behind we can see the orange of the tigers. At the back of the tent are two large wheels, a ladder, poles, boxes, rings, a platform. Ropes hang from everywhere with complicated knots and cables criss-cross the open space above the ring. The light streaming through the holes in the tent look like stars in the night sky. Looking closer, I can see faded white stars painted on the ceiling between thin red stripes. We were too late to get preferred seating for the whole family so I will sit at the front with the kids for the first bit and then switch with my husband in the bleachers (fig. 5.10).

Researcher: The materials of Kelly Miller are a vital part of the staging performances.

They assist in the reaffirmation of behaviours, as seen with the trapeze, but they also perform on their own. "The constructed setting

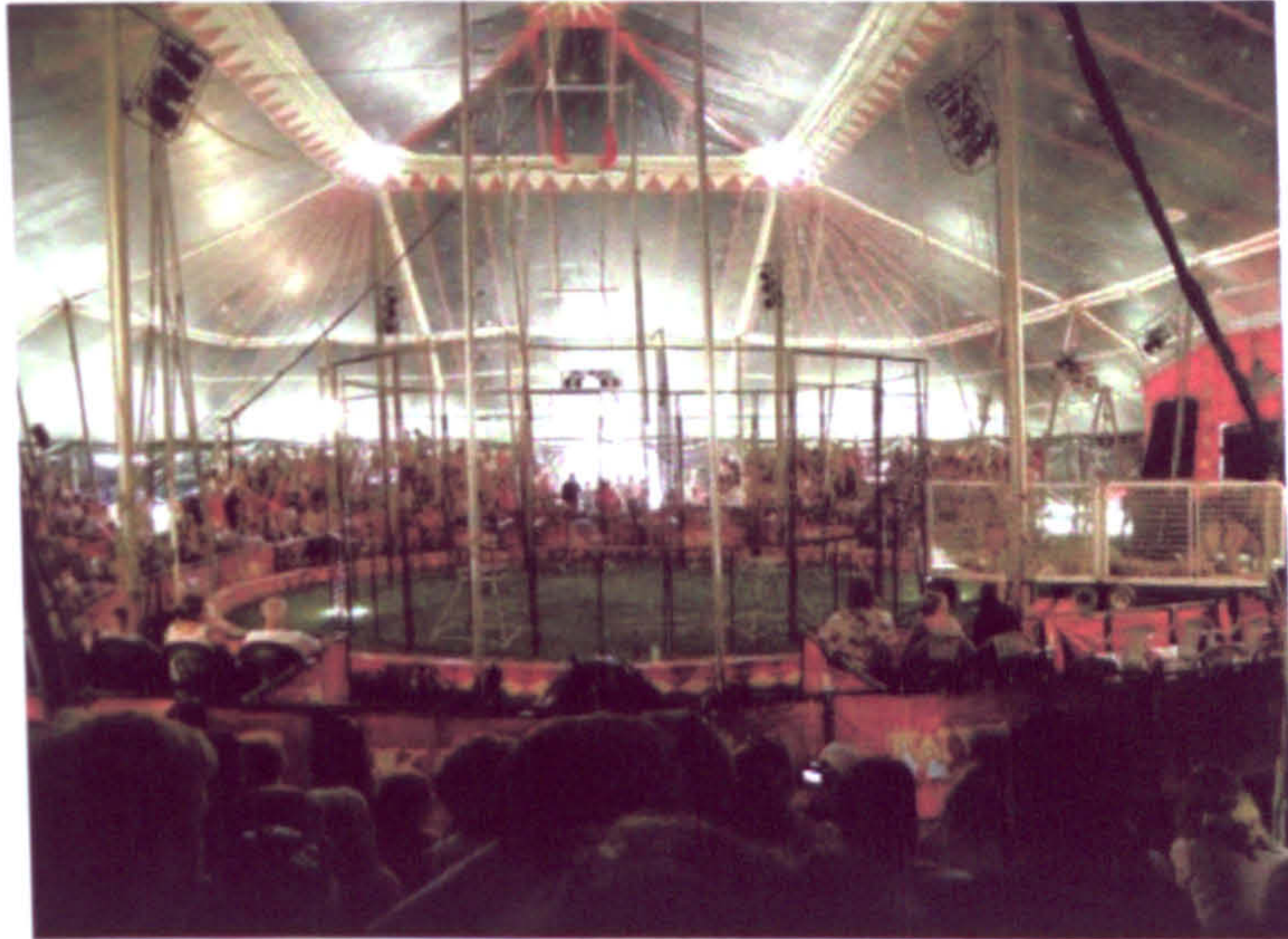


Figure 5.10: Kelly's Island, OH on August 3, 2009.

of performance may be active" (Pearson 2006, p220). The tent and props create a performance of anticipation for the audience, but they also enhance the performance when the stage is less than perfect (Pearson and Shanks 2001, p23). A clean ring mat and costume can work to 'hide' the less than perfect conditions of a muddy lot but today no extra work is needed.

Narrator: The main stage of the tent is where the show happens but it is also the stage around which the ritual of movement revolves. The circus moves to perform and the stages it occupies, in the form of a lot, are determined by their ability to hold the tent and related vehicles. Performances and roles change in connection to the stage throughout the day as the stages themselves change. The show in the ring is the point at which the performances of demobilization and mobilization overlap in such a way to produce a stage and performance that are specific to this place and time. However, the materials and people of the stage and place also maintain the stable and recognizable quality of Kelly Miller. It is the lived relationships between them that account for difference in the production of the stage. "Long-running shows are not dead repetitions but

continuous erasings and superimposings. The overall shape of the show stays the same, but pieces of business are always coming and going” (Schechner 1985, p120).

The Show

Ringmaster: “You want to start big and end big.” It’s a rollercoaster. “There is a feel to a performance that you want to maintain where ever possible. You want to build energy and interest and keep the eyes moving from ground to air.”

Aerialist: That’s the whistle. We run through the backdoor waving to the audience. It’s hard to see beyond the first few rows, but it sounds like a full and appreciative house. Running into the ring and giving the tiger arena a wide berth, the dense darkness of the bleachers looming beyond the aisle confirms the fullness of the tent. I climb the web and above the blinding light in the ring I can see the smiling faces of the crowd in the bleachers. Down the web and out the backdoor as the cat act begins.

Animal Trainer Husband: I’ve been working on my styling. I’m told I need to hold it a bit longer after each behaviour, maybe give the fingers a little flick. “I’ve come a long way from just raising a hand, but the style is sacrificed for survival.” When they’re in a mood the cats take priority over showmanship. Not every behaviour gets a style so the audiences doesn’t always applaud when they should.

Local School Teacher: He is climbing hand over hand, as if it was no effort at all, up a rope hanging just feet in front of us. I follow his progress up to a pole with loops and a trapeze hanging almost directly above us. He is at the top of the tent



Figure 5.11: Camden, NY on July 14.

swinging from loop to loop to the other end. He looks as though he is laughing while hanging by his feet. I think he just winked at the ladies sitting behind me (fig. 5.11). He looks like he is walking upside down. My neck hurts from looking up. He slides down the rope and runs to the centre of the ring to bow. There was a huge black cage there a moment ago. That disappeared quickly and quietly.

Local School Teacher Husband: My family in the preferred seats are mesmerised by the guy walking upside down. I can see their mouths hanging open as they gaze up at him. From back here in the bleachers the view is wider and I am amazed at how fast and smoothly the tiger cage is disappearing. It is made of panels and they seem to be just peeling away as each is grabbed by a guy and run to the back of the tent. They are stacked against the end of the bleachers. The ring is completely cleared in a matter of moments. I missed the guy walking upside down.

Musician: He climbs up the pole resting on his dad's forehead. When he reaches the top I lower the music volume. This act is timed exactly the same almost

every night. The announcement is made and under the drum roll the song ends and I quickly adjust the volume and cue up the next song. He steadies himself and...there. As his legs go up into the headstand at the top of the pole I start the next song, loud, as the cymbals crash. As he descends I slowly ease the volume back down to its normal show level and prepare for the next cue.

Prop Crew: I stay just outside the ring and the light until he is down. The pole is lowered, as if on a pivot, and I run into the ring in time to catch it and run it out into the shadows at the back of the tent (fig. 5.12). Again I return to the edge of the ring, crouched between the ring and the preferred seating rail. Performing Family run out of the ring, I pop up, grab the edge of the ring mat and run toward the back of the tent. I hear a cry of surprise behind me in the audience. They didn't know I was there. Quickly, the mat is folded and we drag it out of the ring into the



Figure 5.12: Girard, PA on July 26.

shadows. I will stay here until I am needed again. I am invisible.

First of May: As the horses run around the ring I look at the audience through Rider's legs. The faces I see streaking by are wide and open with surprise and laughter. My performance is working. I am a member of the audience auditioning for the bare-back riding act. Rider whispers the cue and I begin to stand up. Applause from the audience, they are with me. A little more fear from me, clutching Rider's neck and pulling at his costume. Another whispered cue and it is time. Planting and steadying my right leg I put my left foot on Rider's knee and push

off into the air. I am flying around the ring with my trousers around my ankles. The immediate reaction from my body is to curl into a ball as I fly around the ring on the **mechanic**. I hear laughs and shouts as I run out the back curtain. Ringmaster cries to the audience, “She’s running away, but not to join the circus!”

Aerialist: While I pull on my black coveralls, I tell First of May to keep a starfish position next time during the ‘fly around.’ It looks better and give the audience a better opportunity to make sense of the gag. Then I move back into the tent to stand behind the ring just in front of the bandstand. From here I direct the levelling of the trapeze. Now back to the house to change costume and makeup and check on Baby at Babysitter’s house (fig. 5.13).

Researcher: *The multiple performances*

conducted in and around the tent during the ticketed show overlap in very carefully choreographed patterns.

During the next two to four hours the performances of the route;

demobilization, rehearsal, and everyday performances of dinner and family, will

weave together the stages necessary to put on a show with one notable exception. As the show goes on the performances of mobilization that normally accompany the second show of the day are absent. What happens in the ring is the product of the ritual of movement, but it is also a producer of that ritual. The stage of the tent is produced by demobilization performances but the acts



Figure 5.13: Southwood, NY on July 15.

in the tent determine the housing spotting. For example, the performers with heavy equipment and numerous acts are spotted closer to the backdoor. The use and presence of props determines the running order of the show based on when and how they must be loaded in and out of the tent and the ring. Here, the opening tiger act is followed by an act which draws the attention of the audience away from the dismantling or de-staging performance of the cage teardown.

In Chapter 4 the performance of the drive is almost forgotten through performances of demobilization. On the stage created by those demobilization performances the drive is referenced through the performances of the prop crew. These are the men that were the star performers of the morning's demobilizing performance and here, though they are meant to be invisible moving props in and out of the ring, they are a trace of the performance of the drive. Their carefully choreographed shifting of props and equipment is directed by how and when these materials need to be assembled and disassembled. Each season the show changes but the crew has worked with every imaginable act and through a process of 'erasing and superimposing' particular past experiences and memories they are able to create a staging performance that is specific to this time and place and almost invisible. This is done through the organization of the running order which keeps the audience eye moving, but also through the practised, rehearsed, and refined performances embodied by the veteran crew. The consideration of the bodily movement of the performers and prop crew, and even the audience, in the creation of a running order reflects the importance of these performances to the continuation and maintenance of the

ritual of movement in practice and representation (Cresswell 2006c; Desmond 1997).

Juggler: It's intermission and the crowd spills out of the tent onto the midway.

They walk up and down in search of food, entertainment, the toilets, and rarely notice us (fig. 5.14). Money is passed over to ride the ponies and see the snakes but in our red polo shirts we look like any other general employee. Heavy make-up and the glint of sequins peaking out of the collar give us away as stars to the more observant, but to most, we are invisible.

Ringmaster: "We've broken the rules a bit. Most of our performers are involved with concessions. If we were to end the first half with a big **production** with most of the cast, no one would



Figure 5.14: Camden, NY on July 14.

be manning their concession booths when intermission starts. So we put in a smaller, high-energy act to allow the performers time to run home and change into their red shirts and black pants, and it seems to be working. Artistically, it's a negative, but..."

Animal Trainer Wife: By the time the second half starts, the dogs are penned for the night and there is time to get dinner is started, and set up outside for the barbeque tonight. Daughter's bath can wait until tomorrow morning. Tonight she can continue to play with the other circus kids.

Office Manager: After intermission of the second show the sponsor returns to the office. Once they leave, instead of packing down, I merely lock the office door,

my job is done for the evening. “No one applauds when I leave the office. But being Office Manager doesn’t hurt my bones. It’s the greatest feeling in the world to be as high as I could on the trapeze. But what are you going to do?” I go home to prepare for the evening barbeque.

Tent: As the sun begins to set, my skin cools, but inside two large audiences and show lights warm me as the night goes on. From outside I appear a hulking striped mass standing still against the sky, but inside I hold excited movement and energy. I look down on an audience looking skyward. Not to me, but to the trapeze where Aerialist smiles down at them, teasing them with evermore difficult and stunning tricks. I watch the men in red shirts run here and there, around and behind performers and animals, setting and removing props and ropes. I watch as the crowd holds its breath at the “twisting, turning, terrifying Wheels of Destiny” and feel their breath push out at my walls as they release the breath in a collectively gasp (fig. 5.15).

First of May: I changed my make-up and hair for this next act with some tips from the other girls. The elephants stand in a line waiting at the backdoor. This is my first appearance as a **North Starlet**. Lisa lowers her head for me to grab her harness. At a command she offers her knee and I step up hard as she throws me up onto her neck. I’ve been practicing this move for the last two weeks. It will never be seen by the audience, but it is the hardest



Figure 5.15: Basking Ridge, NJ on June 16.

Photo by Peter Erceg.

part and will stay with me forever in the scar on my left hand. “...beautiful Red River Valley...” The curtain opens and the elephants run into the tent, at a surprising speed, to a roaring applause. Ringmaster styles to us, giving us the ring. As the first girl in I acknowledge the style and return it, as I have seen the other performers do. Recognition dawns on some audience faces as they gaze up at me. Wasn’t that the girl on the horse in her underwear? Yes it was. Did I fool you? The elephant lumbers around the ring challenging my equilibrium as I attempt to smile and wave at the audience and not fall off.

Elephant Trainer: Ringmaster announces us out. I style to the audience and then to Ringmaster, giving the ring back to him. I turn and run out with the elephants already heading for the door. Outside, the North Starlets are down and I head back to the animal department with the girls [elephants] to change and be ready for elephant rides when the show finishes (fig. 5.16).

Researcher: A change to the ritual of movement is visible in the evening preparations. Office Manager only locks the door to the office instead of securing the cabinets and chairs and



Figure 5.16: Cummington, MA on June 21.

Photo by Peter Erceg.

computer before beginning preparations for an evening gathering. Chapter 4 showed this time between intermission and end of show to be a carefully crafted interweaving of staging performances for the ring with performances of mobilization. Today the performances of mobilization are not interwoven with

nightly preparation for social gatherings, but replaced by the staging performances for an evening barbeque. The ticketed performance goes on inside the tent as the everyday performances of food preparation and childcare continue in the backyard, albeit in a slower tempo. These changes in the orientation of performance stand as a rupture to the ritual of movement (Pearson and Shanks 2001, p125). Tonight the ritual of movement will pause. The usual pattern of performances, of The Show and mobilization, is interrupted and becomes a discontinuous performance (p125) with a repetition of The Show, before restoring its usual pattern. However, the effects of this quiet rupture will not become clear until tomorrow.

Tent: The show ends and as the crowd pours out into the night I seem to deflate. Inside all that is left is an empty ring surrounded by empty chairs and bleachers and dying lights. Tonight I will stand tall and hallow above the field instead of folded and lashed to a trailer. I will cool and my ropes and stakes will strain against the ground and loosen as I shrink ever so slightly. I will stand against the wind and the knots holding me will settle and tighten (fig. 5.17).

Electrician: Tonight I leave the

plant on until Midnight.

After the show, there is

little to do. The show

lights are off and the

evening is mine for

awhile. Dinner from pie

car and a movie with the

guys in the bunkhouse

before I return to work briefly to shut down the plant.



Figure 5.17: Westfield, NY on July 22.

ENSEMBLE: *Outside Animal Training Family's house. Evening. A scattering of camp chairs and tables with two grills set in the centre. Office Manager and Transportation Manager arrive with more chairs, food, and drinks. Drummer and Musician arrive with chairs, food, drinks, and, as usual, music. First of May arrives with another chair and snacks. Cooking begins as they comment on the break from bad weather. Office Manager is a retired aerialist and compliments First of May on her performance and tells her to smile more, more teeth and slower, tighter styling. Take time to pause and notice the audience. Aerialist arrives late from putting Baby to sleep, but there is still food and drink. She enjoys talking to Office Manager and hopes to train with her whenever there is an extra day, but they never seem to find the time. Talk soon turns to old friends and shows. Drummer tells stories of his university days with the owner. Animal Trainer Couple and Manager Couple have worked on many shows together and share stories of bad jumps and lots. The barbeque lasts late into the night. When the generator shuts down at Midnight, they continue on. Eventually, each head home to enjoy a night without an early alarm at the other end.*

Narrator: Tonight the group performance of 'cocktails' is restored by additional characters but maintains its usual narrative of engaging in storytelling which, by its nature, serves as advice and counsel (Benjamin 1992, p83-107). On its own, this group behaviour of the barbeque is merely a reaffirmed performance. However, when it is viewed in the context of the ritual of movement, it represents a disruption and reorientation to the ritual of movement. The idea of a rupture in performance is usually to do with an unexpected break in rhythm, or pattern, that marks a performance through a refocusing of purpose, but it can also be understood as a interrupted practice and shift in orientation (Pearson and

Shanks 2001, p118, 125). The pause in Kelly Miller's ritual of movement is not unexpected but it is an interruption. The shift in the orientation of performance tonight and tomorrow morning will create a refocusing of performance during The Show. Tomorrow, the pause and 'reshuffling' of performances within the ritual of movement, replacing mobilization with 'cleaning' and a repetition of 'The Show,' will illustrate how the carefully choreographed bundles of performance create a stable stage for Kelly Miller's performances.

Another Day

Animal Trainer Wife: We slept in to 07:30 this morning, the same time we would normally reach the lot. Still a few hours until lights. I made coffee last night and I'm heating it up on the stove as usual. This morning is just like all the others except we haven't driven and set up is done. School at 9 but no brunch this morning.

Aerialist: In town this morning to do some laundry and grocery shopping. We didn't get going until after 10, it took ages to get everyone together.

Ringmaster's wife is already at the laundry doing the crews' uniforms, taking up the machines as usual. Concession Manager is already at the grocery buying up all their buns, hot dogs, apples, sugar and ice. Every town we joke he needs to leave some for the rest of us.

Clown: It is a good day to clean. Nothing to set up, the weather is dry. There is time to get the traces of mud from the house and the props. Dirty and worn props are not acceptable, regardless of the weather (fig. 5.18).

Researcher: *Already the day distinguishes itself as not 'just one day.' The specifics of each day that are normally lost to the ritual of movement (as seen in Chapter 4) are*



Figure 5.18: Sagamore Hills, OH on August 1.

distinctly different even though some performances are routine. The usual morning meeting of brunch is absent, seemingly because the drive and demobilization performances, which cue the brunch performance, are absent. However, the performances of going into town still wait until 10:00, as on any other day, and are shown to be expected and usual despite being marked as different due to the lack of the usual preceding performances that cue a 10:00 departure. These restored behaviours create a familiarity in a town that might be completely unknown through the expected performances of the Ringmaster's Wife and Concession Manager. This particular bundle of performances illustrates how the stationary points of an unfamiliar town can serve as stages to reaffirm Kelly Miller's performances of mobility without necessarily tying them to these points but this bundle is also haunted by the reorientation of the overall ritual of movement. The usual cues within the performances of demobilization are missing and create an illusion of extra time in which new bundles of staging performances are inserted, such as cleaning the house and props. The ruptured performance of a two day stand creates an opportunity for additional performances and reaffirming routine performances

but, as we will see, also cues performances of refocusing to account for the shift in the overall rhythm of the ritual of movement.

Ringmaster: “It’s only one day does not apply to this town and I made everyone aware of that. No, it’s two days. It’s a phrase I don’t like, it’s only one day, it encourages sloppiness. The moment we are just going through the motions, we lose something.” Showtime seems to have snuck up on me and the rest of the show. We are all a bit slower off the mark. I am using quite a few of my stalls today. “You never want there to be silence.” The animal acts are running long. The musician is restarting the music more than usual.

Aerialist: Levelling the trapeze takes a bit longer today. The prop crew tightened to the same place as yesterday but it is still too bouncy. It looked fine from the ground but up here I am working harder than usual to perform and be safe.

Prop Boss: Some props are missing but I don’t know until it’s time to move them. It is the performers’ job to set their props. I don’t know if they take them out to clean and forget to bring them back (fig 5.19, 5.20).

Animal Trainer Wife: The dogs are mirroring my ‘offness’ and the act is a bit trying



Figure 5.19: Camden, NY on July 14.

today. “If they aren’t doing their behaviours correctly it’s my fault, not theirs, but we all must work at it until we do it right.” It makes the act drag. The audience doesn’t want to see ‘training’ in the ring but we can’t move on until we get it right.

Musician: The perch act is running long today. It is rare for them to be off but the drum roll will have to cover more silence than usual in expectation of his headstand.

Clown: My timing is off and I am dragging through every gag. The audience seems sedated which doesn't help. There are a few people in the preferred seats



Figure 5.20: Southwood, NY on July 15.

really enjoying the gags. I play to them and their energy and laughs restore me for the rest of the night.

Researcher: The rupture created by the interrupted practice and reshuffling of performances within the ritual of movement begins to become visible in the constant refocusing required in the ring. The lack of demobilization performances this morning provided time for other necessary stabilizing performances like cleaning, laundry, and shopping. However, the missing performances also cue extra altered performances in the ring as the missing staging performances begin to affect the performances. "The designed or built environment of performance may greatly increase or decrease ergonomic problems and these may change from moment to moment, oscillating between acceptable, unacceptable and optimal" (Pearson 2006, p220). The props were not packed to then be unpacked into position, or were removed in order to maintenance and were replaced differently or not at all. The tent was not disassembled and reassembled so the knots are not as fresh, but have settled

overnight changing the stage for aerial rigging. However, this particular interrupted practice which cues the rehearsed bodily memory in the Aerialist to provide stability and safety in the changing conditions of the stage of the tent, also works to reaffirm her performance of rehearsal. This rupture reaffirms the necessity of those rehearsals. In other cases, the effects of the missing performances seem to be forcing reoriented performances.

In the case of the animal act, the performance in the ring is serving more as a rehearsal than a polished act. The clown is taking cues from the audience instead of presenting them with cues to laugh. The usual controlled tempo of the show is now one of stops and starts as the Ringmaster and Band attempt to cover breaks or stalls in the choreographed pattern of performances that, yesterday put on a seamless show, today are struggling to come together. However, despite the discontinuous activity, the show still comes together through the flexible performances of the Ringmaster and Band as they restore performances specific to this situation, much like the pull off described at the end of Chapter 4. The Ringmaster is calling upon a repository of 'stalling' performances while the Band is supplementing their performance with additional music. Again, while the rupture changes the orientation of performances, it also presents the opportunity to reaffirm particular performances of maintenance. Importantly, despite the laboured staging and ring performances experienced by the circus, to the audience the show in the ring continues much the same as it did yesterday. The audience is unaware they are witnessing a refocusing of performance as the show goes on and the performances of mobilization are restored to the known pattern of the ritual.

Tent Boss: Teardown is slow and awkward. Everyone is bumping into each other and jostling for position to load and pack away equipment. It's all taking longer than usual, knots are too tight, poles have sunk into the ground.

First of May: The heavy **light boxes** are coming down on my head. I'm usually out of the way before that happens. My teardown work is delayed while I wait for help to loosen a knot. This means my timing will be off and I will have to load the poles differently. Before I finish I need help again to shift a pole that has sunk into the ground and is pinning the bandwagon door open. It is frustrating that it is taking so long. I still have my house to pack down which will also take longer than usual. Everything is still out because we were late getting back from town before the show.

Tent: At the end of the night I collapse to the ground, seemingly exhausted. Again, as most nights, I will be unlaced, folded, and lashed to a trailer. I will spend the night ringed by trucks and houses. Without the colourful vinyl of the tents the show's village of vehicles look haphazard (fig. 5.21, 5.22).

Researcher: During the two day stand, it has become clear that Kelly Miller Circus is a

*place created
through multiple
performances of
staging carefully
choreographed by
not just the 70
people on the lot
but the 24-Hour*



Figure 5.21: Greenville, PA on July 27.

Man a day ahead, the Advance Team a few weeks ahead, and the staff in Hugo.

It is a place that needs the rhythm and ritual of movement to maintain itself.

When the content of the ritual is shifted, particular contents are shown to be vital to

*maintaining the
format of the
ritual. The shifting
of the relationship
between the
performances of
demobilization,
The Show, and*



Figure 5.22: Greenville, PA on July 27.

*mobilization highlights the importance of that particular formulation of
processes to the stability of the Kelly Miller stage. When the show wakes on the
second morning, having not conducted the mobilization performance, the day's
ritual is already marked as different and inevitably difficult, but not impossible.
The moments within the ritual of movement that appear unnecessary if Kelly
Miller stays still are shown to be necessary for the maintenance of the ticketed
performances as well as the everyday performances. However, the occasional
absence of performances is also shown to be necessary in order for the
performances to be reaffirmed in the ritual of movement.*

*This is not to say that the rupture presented by the shifting of performances is a
dramatic change to the overall performance of Kelly Miller Circus. The
performance continued still recognizable as Kelly Miller Circus. However, it was
visibly marked, to the people of Kelly Miller, as, perhaps, unexplainably different
from yesterday (Pearson and Shanks 2001, p118). The stage was not set as
usual. The unexpected and unexplained element of the change in rhythm*

reinforces the role of 'forgetting' in the maintenance of the ritual. This is not the first time that a two day stand created a refocusing of performance, and it will not be the last. The fact that the effects are forgotten provides an opportunity for reaffirming particular performances which are vital to the production of a stable, yet flexible, stage of Kelly Miller Circus and its varied performances.

ENSEMBLE: Animal Training Family's box truck. Evening. The show is packed and the last bits of trash are collected around the lot as the seat wagons are reshuffled for the morning drive. It is a bit colder tonight with a light rain. Animal Trainer Couple, First of May, and Aerialist perch inside the packed truck surrounded by dog, tiger, family, and barbeque props. They share a bag of chips and quietly sip their nightly cocktail looking out over the empty space that was the ring. Packing down seemed to take ages and getting up to drive tomorrow will be harder than usual. Spirits and energy will be low on the lot and in the ring. They always look forward to two day stands as a chance to rest, but are always exhausted at the end of the second day. It's almost easier to just keep moving.

Narrator: There is a tension in the show that is released in the two day stand. The ritual of movement specific to Kelly Miller Circus is one that needs to be restored continually in order for it to be maintained. When given the opportunity to 'rest' the rhythm and content of the ritual is ruptured subtly, yet significantly, which cues a renewal, reworking, and reaffirming of the bundled performances that make up the ritual of movement. In this way, the chapter demonstrated how each performance is dependent upon the performances of demobilization and

mobilization for its continual, and recognizable, restoration. Additionally, by exploring how the ritual of movement in Kelly Miller Circus produces stages for its varied performances, this chapter also explored how each stage directed the restoration of its related performances which could result in a subtly different, yet recognizable, performance as in the case of the 'trip to town.' The idea of the stage also presented a way for stationary locations to be understood as assisting in the maintenance of mobility performances instead of the management of mobility performances commonly understood through the concept of 'moorings' (Adey 2006, 2010; Urry 2003, 2007). This relationship between the ritual performances and stationary stages introduced the use of ruptures as a way to maintain the ritual of movement. Restoring The Show despite the rupture presented by the lot and sponsor, specifically requiring a stay of two days, maintains the ability of the people of Kelly Miller to perform despite ruptures to the ritual of movement.

By tracking the performances of individual characters over the two days, the chapter showed how the absence of particular performances of mobility staging, specifically the absence of the related performances of mobilization, driving, and demobilization between the two Shows, created an opportunity for maintenance performances such as, cleaning props, rehearsal, and 'stalls.' The interrupted practice of the ritual of movement marked the performance of a two day stand as different. But it also reaffirmed the importance of the choreographed pattern of performances within the ritual, such as the interlacing of demobilization and mobilization performances with The Show, to the stability of Kelly Miller Circus' particular processes of stable mobility. The rupture of the two day stand presents the opportunity to reaffirm the performances of the ritual of movement through a forced forgetting and remembering. The final ensemble reveals that

this performance of a two day stand, and its related ruptures and disruptions, are not unfamiliar. The idea of the stage in this chapter, representing not only the areas in which performances take place, but also the production of those areas, presents a process of mobilization that is shown to be not only necessary to the maintenance of stability within Kelly Miller Circus, but also a process which can fluctuate in its maintenance in order to attend to the specifics of the day and lot.

“The basic function of ritual is to restore behaviour. The meaning of individual rituals is secondary to its primary function, which is a kind of collective memory-in/of-action” (Schechner 1985, p113). The memory of the two day stand is shown to be a selective memory. The refocusing caused by the ruptures and disruptions of the missing drive reinforces and reaffirms particular performances of staging, but also performances of restored improvisation in the case of the Ringmaster. His stalling to cover the delays in The Show were not completely improvised since he was pulling from a repository of performances created for just such an occasion, but the use of the stalls was an act of maintenance cued by a rupture, or disruption, to a pattern of performances. Not all disruptions to the patterns of performances which create the recognizable Kelly Miller Circus are necessarily ruptures resulting in a refocusing and reorientation of performance. The continual movement from town to town inevitably presents daily, seemingly minute, disruptions to the way in which the ritual of movement is performed. However, as Chapter 6 discusses, unlike ruptures, these disruptions work to maintain and restore the flexibility of Kelly Miller’s ritual of movement and ticketed performance by reaffirming improvisational performances as acts of maintenance. Acts of maintenance are shown to be a significant tool for flexibility in the restoration and reaffirmation of behaviours, as well as memory, in the continuing mobile performance Kelly Miller Circus.

Chapter 6

The Show Will Go On: Stabilizing mobility through improvisation

"It changes every day it's going to move. The movement is a necessity.

It's about tradition and what works and if it works why mess, why re-invent the wheel."

Natalie Cainan, Kelly Miller Circus, July 10th, 2008 season

The preceding chapters illustrated how Kelly Miller Circus changed every day and just how necessary the movement is to the continuation or maintenance of the recognizable situation and place of Kelly Miller Circus. In outlining the ritual of movement present in Kelly Miller, Chapter 4 also highlighted how the performances within the ritual changed depending on the conditions of the day, for example the route of the drive, the spotting of the lot and the evening drive off the lot. By describing what happens when particular mobility performances are left out of the ritual of movement, Chapter 5 revealed the act of driving between towns to be a performance necessary to the stability of the ticketed performance. In both these chapters, there were moments of fluctuation and disruption. In Chapter 4 the evening move off the lot, and in Chapter 5 the 'offness' created by a two day stand, were shown to be regular occurrences even if they were forgotten, as in the case of the two day stand.

This chapter investigates how it is possible for the circus to continue to recognize itself when it is constantly fluctuating. The moments presented in the preceding chapters can be understood as recognizable fluctuations or disruptions because they have happened before. However, each fluctuation or disruption, though familiar, is also unique due to the new stage on which it occurs. This chapter presents improvisation as the stable process through which these fluctuations and disruptions are approached and managed. By its nature of being a mudshow Kelly Miller is organized

and 'built' to deal with the fluctuating obstacles of roads, lots, and weather. The ritual of movement performed by Kelly Miller Circus is one filled with constant improvisation. The ability and necessity to improvise is such an accepted, and expected, part of life that it can become almost invisible. Like the invisibility of the daily drive, daily acts of maintenance in the form of improvisation are rendered invisible by their success in continuing the recognizable place of Kelly Miller (Roach 1996b, p222).

The need for improvisation is apparent in the practice of setting up in a new lot daily, however the success of the improvisations are driven by the show's 'responsibility to play.' This chapter looks at the ways in which improvisation works as acts of maintenance for the ritual of movement and ticketed performance of Kelly Miller Circus. It shows the fluctuating process of improvisation to be a fixing tool. A tool that literally fixes breaks, or disruptions, in the ticketed performance, stages, and materials as well as fixing mobility performances in the living memory of the circus. First, I outline the driving force behind the process of improvisation, Kelly Miller's self-ascribed 'responsibility to play.' I then describe the variety of improvisation found on the Kelly Miller lot through four types of improvisational processes; temporary, seasonal, ritual, and failed, which are defined by the resulting product and how it is incorporated, or not, into the ritual of movement or ticketed performance of Kelly Miller Circus. This then leads to a discussion about the nature of circus memory as one continually worked at and revised. Finally, I conclude this chapter by presenting improvisation as a constant and stable way in which Kelly Miller Circus approaches the continually reoccurring fluctuations and disruptions of life on the road and in this way maintaining a continuing situation of movement and recognizability of place.

Responsibility to Play

“The circus is a puzzle. Each piece is unique and important and compliments the others.”

Natalie Cainan, July 21st

The preceding chapters illustrate that the ritual of movement in Kelly Miller Circus revolves around the daily drive and ticketed performance. From morning call time, which ensures they are at the next lot in time to raise the tent at 09:00, to repairs, rehearsal, washing dishes, making dinner, and putting children to bed between acts. All these reaffirmed behaviours are cued by the performances and stages linked to the drive and the performance in the ring. At times, the circus seems to manage itself flawlessly in and out of the ring. The pieces of the puzzle all seem to fall into place with minimal effort regardless of the ever changing stages of lot and weather. However, as the previous chapters alluded, this puzzle of Kelly Miller Circus is one that can be put together in multiple ways in order to create the recognizable place of Kelly Miller Circus day after day. The ability to work this puzzle highlights the training, skill and seemingly innate knowledge that is almost hidden in the continually fluctuating work that goes on day after day.

There is an ethos in Kelly Miller Circus of a ‘responsibility to play.’ This ethos is part of the reputation of Kelly Miller and, I am told, one of the reasons it is asked to return to towns every season. They not only have a responsibility to the sponsoring organization but also to themselves. There were two days early in the 2008 season in which Kelly Miller Circus had to abandon its stage of the tent and produce a version of the puzzle that would be very different from any other they would produce that season. However, these two tent-free shows would be similar to each other and elements of the

resulting shows would appear from time to time throughout the season. The first challenge was in Gilmer, Texas on March 31 when the show was produced in a theatre. The second was in Glenwood, Arkansas on April 4th when the stage of an abandoned gymnasium held the ticketed performance. Both days required an alteration of ritual and performance. Here I focus on the stages and show produced in Glenwood. The transformation of a gymnasium into the stage for a circus highlights the background training, skill, and knowledge that works to put on a show each day. In Glenwood, everyone's background skills and training were worked and knowledge of how the puzzle could work evolved as they worked to produce a show they could call Kelly Miller Circus.

On the morning of April 4th, 2008 in Glenwood, Arkansas Kelly Miller Circus arrived at the designated lot and found it to be underwater. They had been flooded and narrowly missed by a tornado the night before and the weather forecast for the day was rain. It was obvious they could not proceed as usual. As the search for a new lot began, trucks and houses were directed to three surrounding parking lots to wait. Three hours later, the last of the houses (mine) was carefully directed into a tight spot in a parking lot adjacent to an abandoned school gymnasium. This would be the lot for today. The tent would not be needed. Its trailer and truck were left at one of the original parking lots. The larger animals could not play the gymnasium and were also left at the original lot and unloaded onto whatever grass was not underwater. A bunkhouse and the cookhouse stayed at the flooded lot along with the five seat wagons. The rest of the show vehicles and houses were so tightly arranged on the new lot that the houses could hear the soft rumblings of their neighbour's water pump, even over the roar of the generator. Houses normally spotted near the backdoor of the tent were here also spotted close to the back door of the gymnasium that would serve as the performers' entrance.

The houses normally spotted in the **front yard**, were relegated to the far edge of the parking lot.

I was the last house brought over from the distant parking lots. This was during the time of daily negotiations between the 24-Hour Man, Lot Supervisor, and **Performance Director** about how vital I was to the show as computer-operator which was reflected in my unpredictable spotting. Because of the late decision to bring me over, I missed the performance of spotting that morning, but from what I observed on my arrival, it was similar to a later lot which I recorded in my field notes:

'I was thinking today that this morning's shuffle was like those tiny games with the squares that you have to move around to get in sequential order or make the picture-
because you have to move a square to a seemingly non-sense place to move something else, so that it can go where it needs to be. Today we were moving trucks in and out, back and forth to make a circus picture, although not the same one as yesterday, but similar.' *Fieldnotes July 24th, Youngsville, PA*

By the time I was spotted the performances of demobilization had already begun, albeit a bit late and slightly modified. As usual, the concessions department constructed the midway at the front of the gymnasium building. It would not have animals today, but with the careful placement of the concession truck, ticket booth and souvenir stand, a recognizable midway would greet the audience later that evening. This was similar to the midway created outside the theatre a few days earlier in Gilmer, Texas.³⁷ The performance department, which would usually use this time for household chores, naps or practice, set to cleaning the inside of the gym and creating a

³⁷ Unfortunately, I did not document the similar but different midways or yards of these two days. This was for two reasons practically and methodologically. At this point in the fieldwork I was interested in how the performance space of the ring changed every day. Practically, during both days I spent the majority of the day helping to create the performance space and reprogram the music cues.

performance stage that would replicate the tent as close as possible. The ring and ring mat were centred in the gymnasium and the band dismantled the bandstand in the parked bandwagon and reassembling it at the back of the ring (fig. 6.1). The backdoor curtain was cleaned of the mud

from the previous days and hung over the reassembled band to enhance the 'circus feel' and give the performers some cover for warm-ups and provide a place for them to make an entrance (fig. 6.2).

General seating would be in

the gymnasium's bleachers down each side and folding chairs discovered in a locker room would serve as limited preferred seating at the front of the ring.

Cleaning the mud from the ring mat and backdoor curtain is a significant moment in the staging of this day. It was a practical decision as there was finally a dry area in which to lay out and mop the vinyl, but it was also a pride issue. Later in the day between shows I noticed

that while it was muddy outside, most performers were wearing their 'good weather' costumes and spent time wiping mud from their shoes before heading into the ring. I

commented on this extra care which began a discussion about the inappropriateness of muddy boots and costumes inside. It was agreed that there was something about being



Figure 6.1: Glenwood, AR on April 4. As the bandstand and aerial rigging are recreated, some props have already been set in their usual position.



Figure 6.2: Glenwood, AR on April 4. The juggler practices as usual while the backdoor curtain is mopped clean.

in a building that highlighted mud and shabby props and so extra care was taken today to present clean and crisp costumes, props, and acts. The unexpected rupture created by being inside caused a refocused performance of costume and prop maintenance, but it also reaffirmed particular performances and training.

Throughout the day props were set in the gymnasium in the same places in relation to the ring and backdoor as when the tent is used. This is one of the few areas of the show that rarely changes, regardless of stage. With all the changes that happen in a day, any day, the prop placement remains the same. This ensures quick and safe changes between acts regardless of their order in the show or the stage. These particular performances of staging provide a recognizability and stability to the show. However, for the aerial props, necessary changes also create a stability to the show in presentation and skill.

Due to the nature of the gymnasium, most of the aerial acts could still perform. While these acts sometimes appear the most dangerous, they can also be the most adaptable. In addition to their act, most aerialists also have a hidden talent for creative rigging. During my brief aerial training I learned that part of the extended training, and a mark of a ‘true’ aerialist, is to know the minimum requirements for

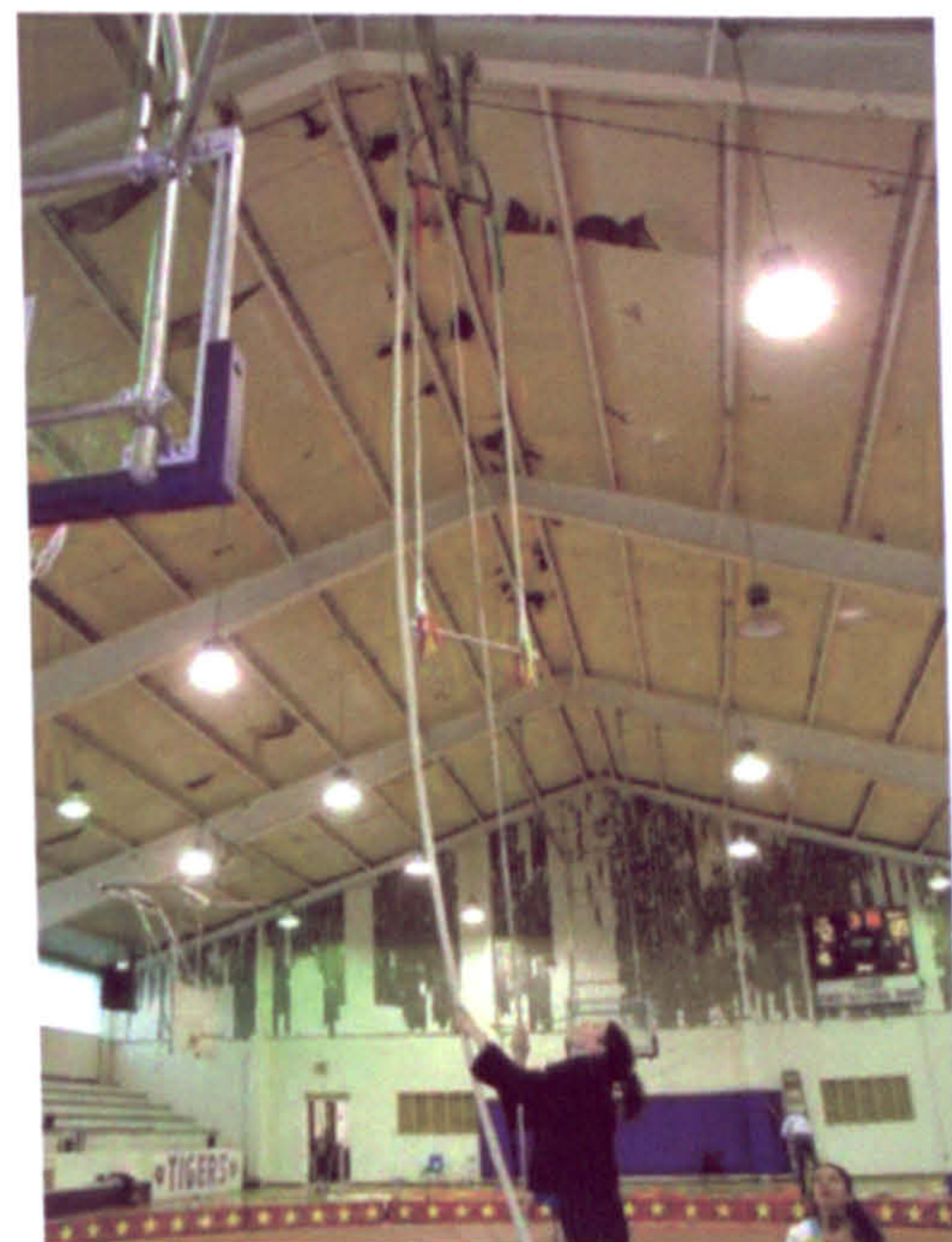


Figure 6.3: Glenwood, AR on April 4. In order to be rigged in this stage, the trapeze would spin instead of swing.

their rigging to be operational and safe. With enough rope and slight adjustments to the rigging itself, they can ‘rig off air’ as long as the ‘air’ is stationary and strong. In the Glenwood gymnasium, the aerialists were able to hang three webs, one trapeze, one mechanic, as well as the backdoor (fig 6.3, 6.4, 6.5). These particular ruptures created a

refocusing and renewal of skill and training, but also restored a few acts to the altered running order which were left out of Gilmer's show in the theatre. However, hanging the trapeze here meant it would not 'swing.' By rigging the trapeze in this way the



Figure 6.4: Glenwood, AR on April 4. While the trapeze artist creates a new routine, another aerialist climbs into the ceiling (top right) to rig a web.

aerialists restored an act to the show, but an act that would be significantly different due to the stage. As a result, the trapeze artist spent the day choreographing and practicing a routine specific to this stage which would maintain the narrative of the production in which she performed, but also compensate for the change in rigging.

Throughout the day, acts of maintenance are combined with reaffirmed behaviours in the production of a recognizable stage of Kelly Miller Circus. The animal department is somewhat maintained, albeit on another lot, providing some stability and routine for the animals, but will be a missing money-making attraction on

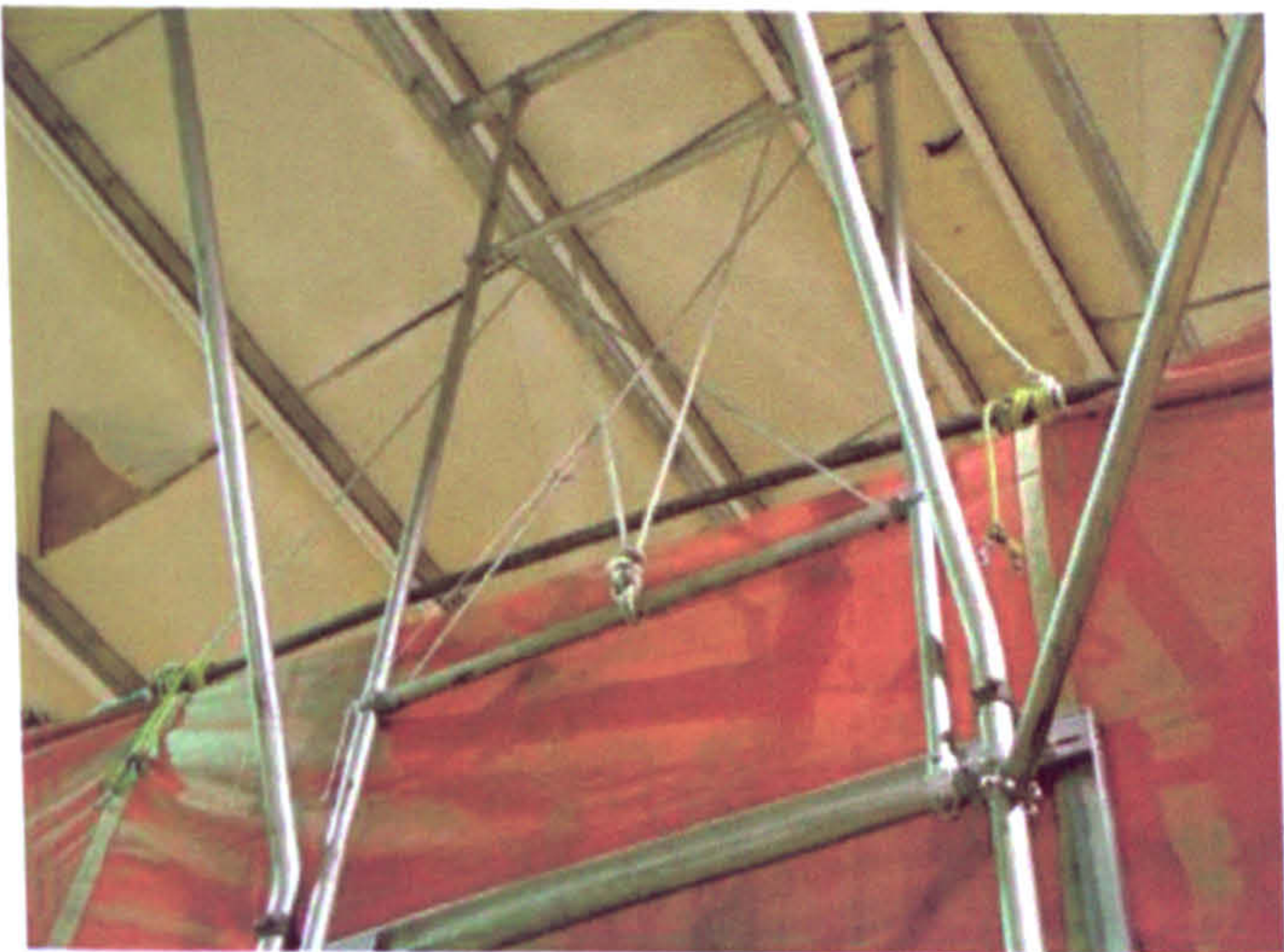


Figure 6.5: Glenwood, AR on April 4. The backdoor curtain was rigged off the basketball hoop of the gymnasium using its own ropes and poles but in a different configuration.

the midway. The stages of front and backyard are blended in the gymnasium parking lot, but the spotting crucial for the performance is maintained where possible. The show stage is recognizable in the placement of the ring, ring mat, backdoor curtain and

bandstand, however the seating arrangement is dictated by the stage of the gymnasium. This proves somewhat difficult for the performers who are accustomed to being surrounded by an audience in close proximity. The production of stages for the performances necessary to create a recognizable Kelly Miller Circus are not the only improvisations making the underlying skill and training visible.

It was not explicitly discussed in the preceding chapters, however the reader might have noticed a change in the order of acts presented in the narratives of Chapter 4 and 5. Specifically, the move of the tiger act from the second half of the show to the beginning of the show. This reflects a change in the overall running order of the show that occurred on May 30th and is discussed later in this chapter. However, slight changes in the running order due to lot or weather is quite common over the course of the season. In Glenwood, the running order had to change to accommodate the lack of large animal acts, some aerial acts as well as modified acts. Making a change in the running order does not mean skipping over the missing act and proceeding to the next. Beyond the aesthetic considerations mentioned in Chapter 5, there are practical concerns as well.

According to the current Ringmaster and former ringmasters interviewed, prop setting in the ring, costume changes and concession work need to be considered when changing the running order in addition to the aesthetic vision. As the running order frequently changed during the season patterned responses began to form. For example, when the tigers cannot, the juggler opens the show. The Perch Pole is moved to the second act and the Acrobats perform their 'backup' jump rope act as well as their regular acts. The Rola Bola moves to the second act and there is an extra clown gag in the first act. These substitutions are not always the same each time the running order is forced to change as each change in the season is cued by different stages and conditions. However, the Performance Director did attempt to keep some stability in the running

order. During interviews with the current Ringmaster, I was told the process of creating the season's running order takes into account that it will have to be modified from time to time. Certain acts are always cut when the running order needs to be changed and factoring that in to the initial running order makes creating and executing modified orders that much easier for the show. This is one way in which the process of improvisation is recognized as a necessary constant in the continuation of the recognizable performance of Kelly Miller Circus.

It would have been easier to not work that day, but the responsibility to play requires that Kelly Miller will work whenever and however possible. It is a matter of pride and profit. To not work is to not bring in money for themselves or their sponsor which can adversely affect their reputation and ability to maintain this town for future seasons. The shows went on as scheduled in both Gilmer and Glenwood, both to full houses. Despite the loss of tent, the audiences seemed to be satisfied with the performance of Kelly Miller Circus presented, but to the people presenting it, the performances were markedly different from a circus performance. As I wrote in my fieldnotes:

'audience doesn't respond in theatre space. The 'unbelievability' doesn't work with the fourth wall, even when the circus breaks it. Everything looks a bit dingy. The performances are made for a ring and tent conditions, they look out of place on the stage. Music and audience proximity is off, there is no noise, no food. Behaviours are different in this space. The audience is respectfully quiet and the performers are coming into the back of the theatre to watch, they would never think of doing that in the tent.' *Fieldnotes March 31st, Gilmer, TX*

'gymnasium has yet another feel-the kids in the audience were running all over the place, behind and through the ring-the space of the gym made them feel like it was play time, I guess, like they're in school gym class. Again the acts weren't quite the same. We only had the gym flood lights and the big open space with no real backdoor (and no curtain until the second show) was a bit disconcerting for the acts-although I got to see them warming up for the first time.' *Fieldnotes April 4th, Glenwood, AR*

My observations illustrate that something was missing even these innovative people, with all their combined experience and skill, could not replicate. These two days of increased disruption and rupture highlight the ability of Kelly Miller to adapt but also how important the materials used in the staging performances are to the production of Kelly Miller Circus. Apparently there are some things that just cannot be improvised. However, the version of Kelly Miller produced at both lots was still recognizable as Kelly Miller Circus. Not only in the use of materials (the ring and back curtain), but also in the acts presented (fig. 6.6, 6.7).

The training, skills, and knowledge of Kelly Miller Circus that hide just beneath the surface of its daily work were tested by the disruptions to the ritual of movement presented by these two lots, but

became clearly visible through processes of improvisation 'built-in' to their training and skill. The responsibility to play is not only an issue of pride and profit, but one of necessity as well. The ruptures created in



Figure 6.6: Gilmer, TX on March 31.

the demobilizing and staging performances by the lots forced Kelly Miller to refocus,

restore, and reassemble their usual performances to create a recognizable, yet different, performance of Kelly Miller Circus (Pearson and Shanks 2001; Schechner 2003). The process of improvisation is integral to the ability to maintain the performances that make up Kelly Miller Circus, similar to Carlson's discussion of deCerteau's idea of pedestrians tactics,



Figure 6.7: Glenwood, AR on April 4.

“Their operations in improvising upon these strategies and combining elements of them in new ways provides a continual performative ground for change, since new strategies come into being through tactical improvisation” (Carlson 2004, p44). Kelly Miller Circus’ ethos of a ‘responsibility to play’ frequently cues performances of improvisation which in turn reaffirms its ability to play in almost any condition. The next section describes the four types of improvisation I observed at work in the continual maintenance of a recognizable Kelly Miller Circus.

Circus Rigging

Obstacles in the form of disruptions to the ritual of movement and ticketed performance are continually present in the life and place of Kelly Miller Circus. From odd shaped lots, to no water source, to no power, to no tent, no sponsor or a lot of weather, the performances of Kelly Miller are tested daily and continually restored through improvisation. The constant improvisations are an expected and accepted part of circus life and are referred to in Kelly Miller as ‘circus rigging.’ I think of them as

acts of maintenance that constantly fold the frequent experiences of disruption into the underlying skill, training, and experience of Kelly Miller and so continually ensure that Kelly Miller will be able to deal with the constant occurrence of disruption. These acts of maintenance are created and restored through "...a systematic principle of selection and realization, tending, through steadily directed adjustments and corrections to eliminate accidents when they can be put to use..." (Bourdieu 1977, p8). In this way, improvisation becomes the fixed way to deal with fluctuating problems, while also maintaining the necessary performance contents of the ritual of movement (Schechner 1985, p315). In Glenwood, particular relations between materials and people were maintained, for instance the trapeze act, while others changed, the running order and midway, in order to produce a recognizable and coherent ritual of Kelly Miller Circus. Here, circus rigging refers to the acts of maintenance made possible by a combination of experience, memory, and materials.

In Kelly Miller, the phrase 'circus rigging' usually refers to the material improvisations and repairs to the tent, houses, vehicles, rigging, etc., but also to the unquestionable faith in the ability to 'rig something up' when needed that will hold for as long as is needed. The preceding chapters hinted at the inevitability of the morning drive. Chapter 4 showed how every moment in the ritual of movement is haunted by the performance of driving. Chapter 5 illustrated the disruptions caused by the postponed drive. I think the inevitability of driving and performing reaffirms the performance of, and faith in, circus rigging. Kelly Miller Circus will always 'rig something up' because it has to, the drive and ticketed performance will not wait.

The third lot of the season illustrated just how integral improvisation is to the performance of life on Kelly Miller Circus. In Honey Grove, Texas, the second show of the evening became a **John Robinson** due to a quickly approaching storm (fig. 6.8).

This was the first time in the season I experienced the performance of an evening pull-

off and I was impressed by the ease at which everyone altered their routine while I ran around in a flustered panic. As the show continued, acts with complicated rigging and props were cut and packed away. The remaining animal acts were also shortened or cut in order to get them loaded into their vehicles. The stages around the tent were quickly dismantled and mobilized despite the lack of labour mentioned in Chapter 4. At the same time the ticketed performance continued in the tent seamlessly adapting to the missing acts.

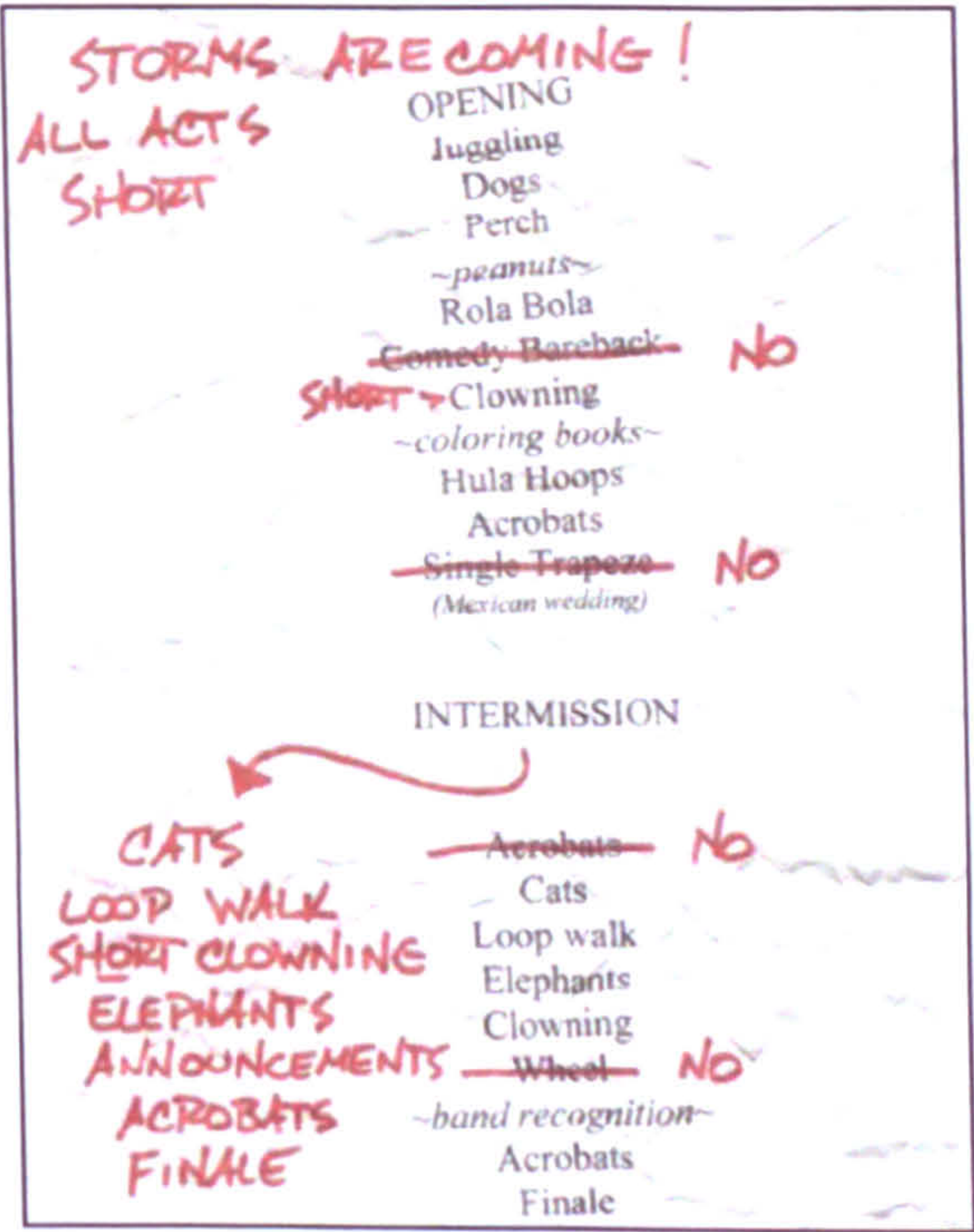


Figure 6.8: Honey Grove, TX on March 17. The revised running order posted at the backdoor.

“Now this is real circus,” Casey laughed as he loaded his trucks in the wind and rain in preparation to pull off the lot.

It is as if the show has to be challenged to feel they are really doing their job. “It wouldn’t be the circus if something didn’t go wrong,” said Danny one night while examining yet another tear at a seam in the backdoor curtain. “It will just have to be fixed,” he sighed. The show will go on and so must the constant performance of acts of maintenance. The backdoor curtain was repaired the following day with bolts because there was no time to spend sewing and gluing the seam back together. Throughout the season there are many acts of maintenance, or improvisation, carried out in the production of the performance and the day to day operation of the show.

Based on my observations and experience during fieldwork, I outline four categories or types of improvisation. These occur at many levels within the place of Kelly Miller Circus from maintenance of the show as a whole, the ticketed performance,

and individual daily life. The *first* is temporary or short term improvisation. These are acts of maintenance that are situation specific and enacted for short periods of time. The *second* is seasonal or long term improvisation. These are acts of maintenance that may last for a longer period of time or for the entire season. The *third* is ritual improvisation. These are acts that may only last a short period of time, but are restored season after season. They probably began as short term improvisations. The *fourth* is failed improvisation. These are fairly common on the individual level, but also occur in the ticketed performance, and provide key moments of ‘skill development’ and reaffirmation of behaviour. These four categories of improvisation highlight the ways Kelly Miller Circus performs itself day after day through the use of multiple and perhaps unrelated traces of performance (Pearson and Shanks 2001). They also speak to the inevitable disruptions and ruptures that occur in those performances, and how the resulting behaviours are incorporated into future performances and acts of maintenance (Pearson and Shanks 2001; Roach 1996b; Schechner 2003).

Temporary Improvisation

A temporary improvisation tends to be situation specific, for example a change in lot layout and spotting. However, temporary improvisations do not necessarily stand as isolated events. These acts of maintenance are specific to the particular disruptions that cued their performance, but they also have the potential to serve as traces for future performances. A change in spotting due to lot size and shape and condition is the most frequent temporary improvisation. This particular improvisation was performed so frequently, in fact, that the preferred lot layout *and* spotting did not occur more than a few times a month, according to my fieldnotes, during my time with Kelly Miller Circus. There is the general rule that houses are spotted in relation to where their inhabitants work during the performance. This organization tends to be upheld even

when there is no tent. This was the case in Gilmer, Texas when the show moved into a theatre. The front and backyards were spotted in separate parking lots at the front of the theatre despite the performers' entrance being at the back of the theatre building. There are also guidelines for spotting the show trucks in relation to the tent which are noted on the architectural drawings of the tent. These are executed almost the same way daily, however even the architectural drawing accounts for shifts and changes.

“Ideally the generator goes on the animal side backing into the bandwagon. That’s the long **jiggers**, right now we’re using the tigers to catch the short jigger. Cookhouse on opposite side [from bandwagon] and **pole truck** on the back [opposite front door], but today in order to work the forklift, the pole truck is here and the cookhouse is on the back. When it’s wet it is important to get it [cookhouse] on the solid, because it can pull everyone else off.” *Chris Beckett, July 29th* (Even on the day of the interview changes had to be made.)

One lot in particular illustrates the ways in which spotting can change in relation to the disruption presented in the lot and the constraints of the ritual of movement. On July 21, 2008 Kelly Miller Circus arrived in Springville, New York to a lot big enough to accommodate the entire show but not accessible due to a line of logs dividing the lot. In order



Figure 6.9: Springville, NY on July 21. The 'B' lot holding the non-performing houses and 'extra' trucks such as the Shop Truck and Cookhouse.

to meet the morning timeline of a tent raising at 09:00 and maintain the overall ritual of

movement and ticketed performance, a decision was made to move non-performing houses to a lot three blocks away. The cookhouse also moved to the distant lot to provide power to the houses separated from the show (fig. 6.9). I drove a show vehicle back and forth between the two lots to shuttle crew members and performers between the tent and the cookhouse. At the original lot, the logs were removed and houses and trucks directed on, but in a slightly different configuration than usual due to the loss of cookhouse and the awkward shape and condition of the lot (fig. 6.10). The actual changes were not so great, but the way in which they were executed created a feeling of confusion and difficulty.

“...could have fit us all on, but there was a time crunch and we needed to start moving things on and around to have done and give the guys a break, and purchasers time to shop, etc. The holding area was needed for the midway.” *Danny, July 21st*

Sometimes it is not the lot itself that creates the need for improvisation, but the ritual of movement and its performances of demobilization as well as the time for the activities of daily life.

The preferred layout and spotting for securing the tent to the trucks was abandoned and a new one devised for this lot and this day. This particular temporary improvisation was informed by the ‘official’ layout of the architectural plans, the lot itself, and the vehicles that needed to fit onto the lot and where they needed to sit in relation to each other and the tent in order for the show to go on. It was also informed by the traces of performance of previous lots with similar conditions. This improvisation fixed the problem of the inaccessible lot but also maintained the performance of improvisation.

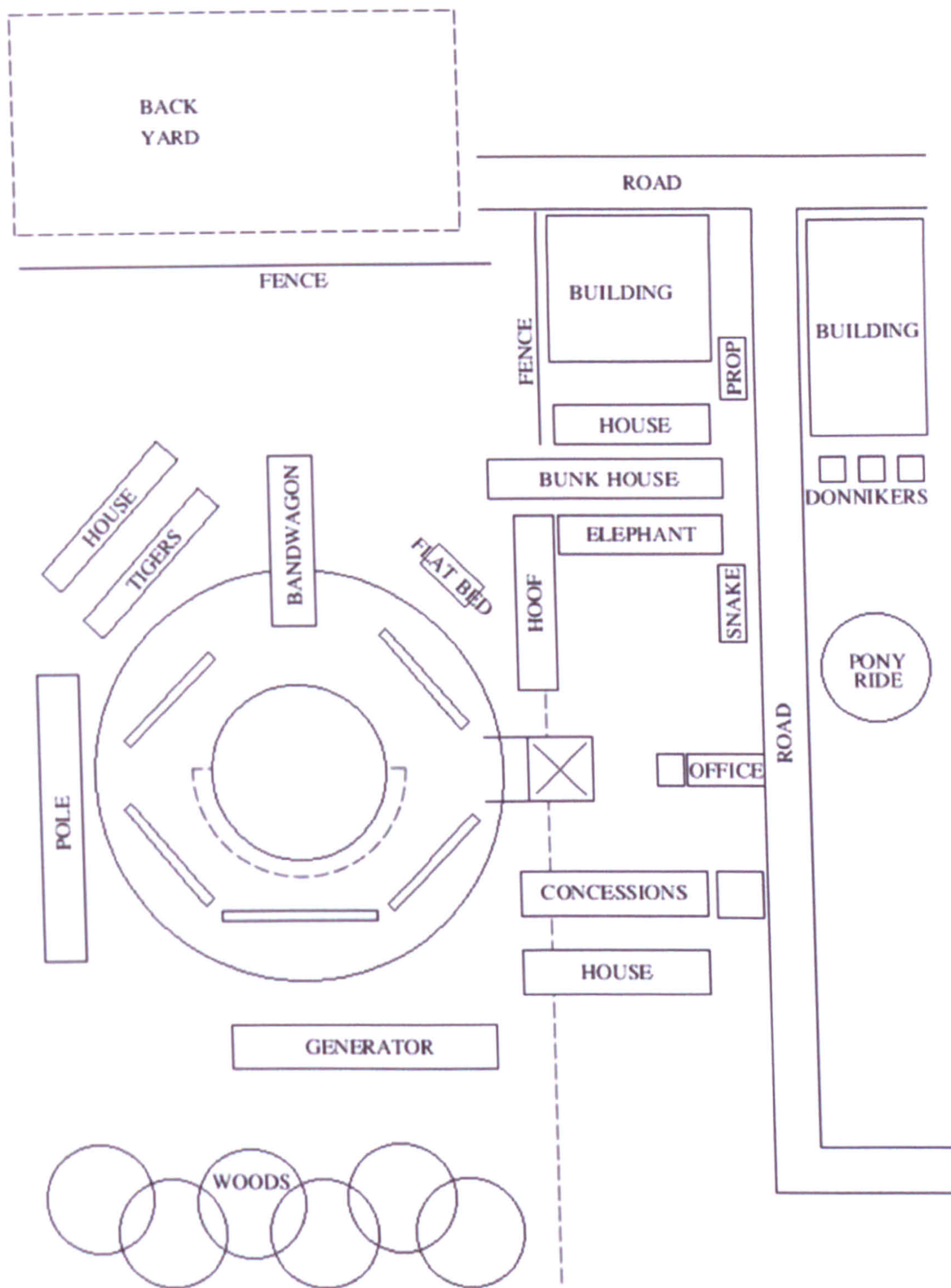


Figure 6.10: The Springville lot on July 21. The dotted line indicates the location of the line of logs. The area to the right of the line served as the holding area as vehicles arrived. Also, between the Generator Truck and the tent there was a significant slope leading towards the woods.

This improvised layout and spotting was a temporary fix for the time spent in Springville, but it cannot stand completely on its own. This was not the first time the non-performing houses were separated from the rest. It is described in this chapter in Glenwood. However, in Glenwood the tent was not used. This was also not the first time that the trucks securing the tent had to be positioned differently due to lot conditions. In East Tawakoni, Texas on March 30, the ground was so soft that only two of the large show trucks could be pulled on around the tent. Each of these situations resulted in different improvisations, but they served as refocusing of skill and performance and informed the performances that followed. The separation of vehicles in Glenwood and the lack of trucks in East Tawakoni are traces of improvisation performances that informed the arrangement in Springville. Although they were restored differently in a way that was specific to Springville. These few examples show how the traces of different performances can be combined to create a different again performance, but one that is still recognizable as demobilizing performances within the ritual of movement of Kelly Miller Circus (Roach 1996a).

This tends to be the nature of temporary acts of maintenance. They are situation specific but do not stand as isolated events. They are restored and reassembled at the next similar challenging moment in order to maintain the performances and stages of Kelly Miller Circus.

Seasonal Improvisations

“It’s a question of how many hats can you wear?” This is how John described the multiple jobs each show member holds. As I stated in Chapter 3, many of the members of Kelly Miller Circus have held various roles in their lives with the circus and hold many roles during each season. One former performer told me that in the 2007 season she was cookhouse purchaser, office assistant, ticket seller, field trip coordinator,

and pony ride operator. The flexibility of the Kelly Miller Circus is upheld by its multi-skilled members ‘pitching-in’ when the need arises. This tradition of pitching-in (and in the process possibly gaining new skills) was a tradition formalized in the employment contracts in the form of a ‘generally useful’ requirement. However, it is no longer included, but still assumed. In this way Kelly Miller fixes the tradition of pitching-in as well as the tradition of being multi-skilled employees, and in the process creates a stable resource of flexibility. This type of employment is a particular trait of the mudshow. Historically, the larger railroad circuses had very strict divisions of labour for their hundreds of employees. In contrast, in the mudshows it was common practice for each employee taking on at least two roles within the show (Davis 2002, p41, 67).

Jobs taken up under the generally useful requirement tend to last at least a season. A seasonal improvisation is one that begins as a temporary fix and extends to the length of the performance season and possibly beyond. These acts of maintenance tend to play out in the changing or adding to an individual work load. The generally useful requirement can be enacted in many ways. The same former performer that held five jobs in the 2007 season, related a story of the requirement resulting in her **pulling hoses** for the season (fig.

6.11). Whatever their form, the seasonal improvisations conducted under the ‘generally useful’ requirement are sometimes reflected in salary. Each member is paid for each role they perform for the show. Seasonal

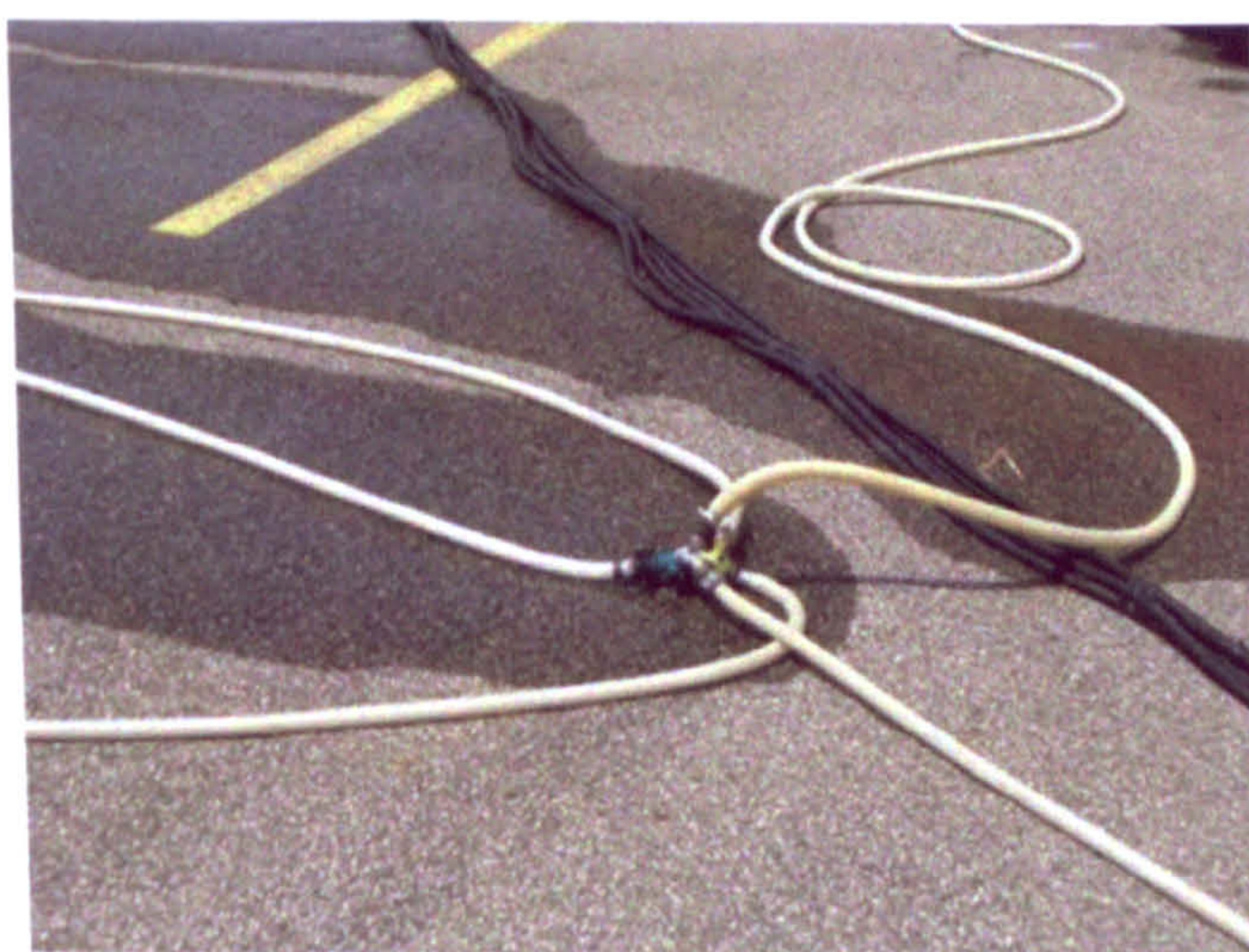


Figure 6.11: Greenville, PA on July 27. There is a complicated system of hoses that provides water to the trucks and houses.

improvisations can also be contractual obligations. The trapeze artist in the 2008 season

was also hired as the showgirl for the bareback horse-riding act, learning the stunts during the dress rehearsal.

Seasonal improvisations occur outside the generally useful requirement as well and are not compensated by the show. This happens when an individual takes on a job of their own accord. For example, the Ringmaster swept out the bandwagon one afternoon and it then became his job for the remainder of the season. This is a minor thing, but others are not and are approached carefully. I became aware of this type of improvisation first hand. In an attempt to be helpful and be accepted into the show, I assisted in the teardown of the backdoor curtain on the second lot. This remained my responsibility for the duration of my time with the show and it was expected that I would continue to do this every night, however my salary remained the same. At the time I was just trying to prove myself to the show and was not aware of the pay arrangements of each employee or the fixing of this responsibility to me. This was eventually explained to me on the first scorchingly hot day of the season, June 7th in Bridgeton, New Jersey. The show was set up on a cement parking lot and the tent was heating to an uncomfortable level. There was no movement of air inside which created an almost unbearable condition for the aerial acts. The show has four large fans to use in such a situation, but at mid-afternoon they were still packed in their truck. I was discussing the heat with Casey when he mentioned the fans. I asked, "Why, if you know there are fans that can help remedy the situation, aren't you setting them up?" He replied, "Because I will be hauling them in and out of that truck for the rest of the season, and I have enough to do."

It could be argued that these improvisations which last over a season are not, in fact, improvisations, which are usually understood to be temporary acts. Beyond the initial improvisation it can be hard to distinguish the initial act of maintenance from a restored behaviour reaffirmed through its consistent use. These categories of

improvisation are based on the initial improvisation as well as how they are incorporated into the overall performance of Kelly Miller Circus. Seasonal or long term improvisations reflect the way in which the initial act of maintenance is rolled into not only Kelly Miller's seasonal performance but an individual's seasonal performance as well. As the act is restored again and again it may eventually come to be incorporated into a tradition which informs behaviour within Kelly Miller. Approaching performance as restored behaviour comes with an understanding of 'tradition' as an 'origin' of behaviour (Schechner 2003, p22). Tradition can be understood to be a conglomeration of improvisations, of disrupted performances, accepted over time, restored again and again (Roach 1995).

Ritual Improvisations

Ritualized improvisations are singular acts of maintenance repeated season after season. Through the discussion of other kinds of improvisation it is becoming clear that the continual presence of improvisation is itself a ritual, or recognizable pattern of behaviour, in Kelly Miller Circus. However there are also specific acts of maintenance that are routinely restored season after season. I present two examples of ritual improvisation that are also considered 'tradition.' The first maintains a regular and expected Fourth of July celebration on Kelly Miller Circus. The second maintains the ticketed performance in the face of unexpected disruptions and is considered a tradition of circus performance in general. Both of these examples highlight how acts of improvisation can become stabilized in ritual. Kelly Miller's Fourth of July celebrations were held on the 6th of July in Berlin, New York. A large supply of frozen burgers and hotdogs were purchased to grill for the company party following the early shows. It is the food preparation that provides the example of a ritual improvisation. A large grill was created out of the backhoe, elephant ride platform, trailer support blocks,

and wooden stakes outside the cookhouse tent (fig. 6.12). Apparently, the same grill was created by the show mechanic in the 2007 season, who was not with the show in 2008, but had apparently done it before in the 2006 season as well. It was not clear when the first version occurred, but I know that it was also created in the 2009 season. The



Figure 6.12: Berlin, NY on July 6. The women cooking are nuns from the travelling circus ministries that spent three weeks with the show in 2008.

improvised grill does not necessarily fix an unexpected disruption created by a lack of materials or labour. Almost every family on the show owned a grill and the cookhouse regularly prepared enough food for the entire show. It does however, fix a way of celebrating the Fourth of July into the performance of Kelly Miller Circus. Kelly Miller seems to take pride in its ability to ‘circus-rig’ a large grill and looks set to keep restoring the improvisation every Fourth of July. The backhoe grill is a recent improvisation that quickly came to be part of the tradition of Kelly Miller Circus. The ritual improvisation apparent in the ticketed performance is one that is considered a tradition of circus performance general and of a clown, specifically.

“The clown is the most important part of the show. You need a good clown.” This is how Natalie started her discussion on what makes a ‘good’ show. Beyond their own performance value, the clown is a vehicle for improvisation within the performance. During an evening performance, moments before an act, a problem is noticed with rigging. It can be fixed but extra time is needed. The Ringmaster is informed and he calls on the clown to take the ring to cover the time for the repair. According to one of the clowns on the 2008 season, a clown is called instead of a

juggler or acrobat because if they fail in their gag, that just makes it funnier. If a juggler or acrobat fails, it is a ‘bad’ performance. Sending the clown out to cover time is a practical solution based on the kind of flexibility they can offer, but it also stems from a recognized need to occasionally improvise. The performance program states, “Due to the hazardous nature of circus performing, this program is subject to change without further notice.” It is expected that there will be moments of improvisation during the performance and it is also expected that the clown will be the one to fill the space. This expectation of improvisation is, in fact, part of a clown’s training. This is perhaps one way in which the clown is the most important part of the show. He allows for the maintenance of the show while also allowing for the inevitable disruption (fig. 6.13).

Rituals are a way people remember, they are memories in action. They are also ways which people deal with the difficulties that trouble daily life (Schechner 1993; 2003, p45). Improvisation



Figure 6.13: White Settlement, TX on March 25. The Prop Truck is used as the dressing room for the clown and also holds the large fans for the tent.

has become a ritual in Kelly Miller Circus and particular improvisations have become rituals in themselves. These ritual improvisations are expected and assumed and when performed, act to reaffirmed behaviours of improvisation. However, not all acts of maintenance on Kelly Miller Circus successfully fix the disruption by which they are cued.

Failed Improvisations

Although acts of maintenance are an accepted and expected part of life on Kelly Miller Circus, not all improvisations are successful. However, even a failed improvisation can work to restore and reaffirm behaviours within daily life performances as well as the ticketed performance. The most common failed improvisation usually occurs at the individual level and usually concerns home or vehicle maintenance (fig. 6.14).

They are called houses, but they are Recreational Vehicles (RVs) built to drive to a campsite and park at a designated level spot of grass or pavement. The larger RVs are made to park, somewhat permanently, in a trailer park. None of them are built to be



Figure 6.14: Kelly's Island, OH on August 5. A Circus Rigged truck suspension. This was one of the last photographs I took during fieldwork, right before the show pulled off the lot.

driven, or pulled, over every imaginable condition of road and terrain everyday for 10 months out of the year. Inevitably, the rigors of the road and lots take their toll on the houses of the circus which commonly comes in the form of leaks. Discovering a leak in the house usually happens while it is raining at which point all one can do is try to minimise the water damage. Methods range from wringing towels out at intervals during the day to rigging cups to antenna cranks with rubber bands.³⁸ The failed aspect is identified when the leaks returns after repairs. At that point, after again, minimising the potential damage, perhaps a new patching material is tried. If and when that fails again, perhaps the house is parked and levelled in such a way that water runs away from

³⁸ See Data Index for the source of this particularly inventive method.

the failed patches, which is exactly what I did with one particularly stubborn leak in my house.

Failed improvisations occur in the production of the ticketed performance as well. The overall change in running order mentioned earlier cued the need for a long term improvisation in the form of integrating the tiger arena with the **opening spec**. The resulting improvisation involved setting the arena in the back half of the ring and extending back to the bandstand. This maintained the opening spec in the front half of the ring. During the opening spec, while the audience was occupied, the tigers were released into the arena and the trainer directed them to their pedestals. This meant the tiger act could begin immediately after the opening spec and maintain the flow of the show. However, this also meant that some of the performers in the opening spec had to work close to the arena with a tiger just on the other side of the wire mesh. This was less than pleasing to some of the performers and a change was made which proved to be a failed, and dangerous, improvisation.

On June 21, in Cummington, Massachusetts, the tigers would not be released into the arena until after the opening spec and after the act was announced. What followed was ten very tense minutes (the amount known because I repeated the first piece of music for the act at least twice) in which the trainer attempted to get his four tigers on their pedestals to start the act. The tigers were confused by the change and their confusion tested their training and their trainer's safety. Consequently the act itself was not of its usual quality and ran very long, which in turn caused the entire show to run long. Because of this, a portion of the audience left early and because there was no one at their midway concessions (they were all still performing) the show lost potential money. This failed improvisation not only affected the quality of the 'show,' it put one of its members in more danger than normal and potentially lost income for the show. At the second show of the day, the initial improvisation was restored. But as

with all restorations of performance, something was different. The performers uncomfortable with the tigers did not work the opening spec.

The individual and show improvisations both failed yet, as with the tight parking in Glenwood informing the tight parking in Youngsville, they influenced later improvisations which maintained either house or show integrity (fig. 6.15). In the case of the patches, better materials were used or practice changed. In the case of the show, the initial seasonal improvisation was restored for the rest of the season and into the following 2009 season. The failed improvisations create a trace of experience to inform the next improvisation. Like the two day stand, the failed improvisation presents a rupture which forces a refocusing of performance, which in turn may reaffirm particular performances as in the example of Cummington.

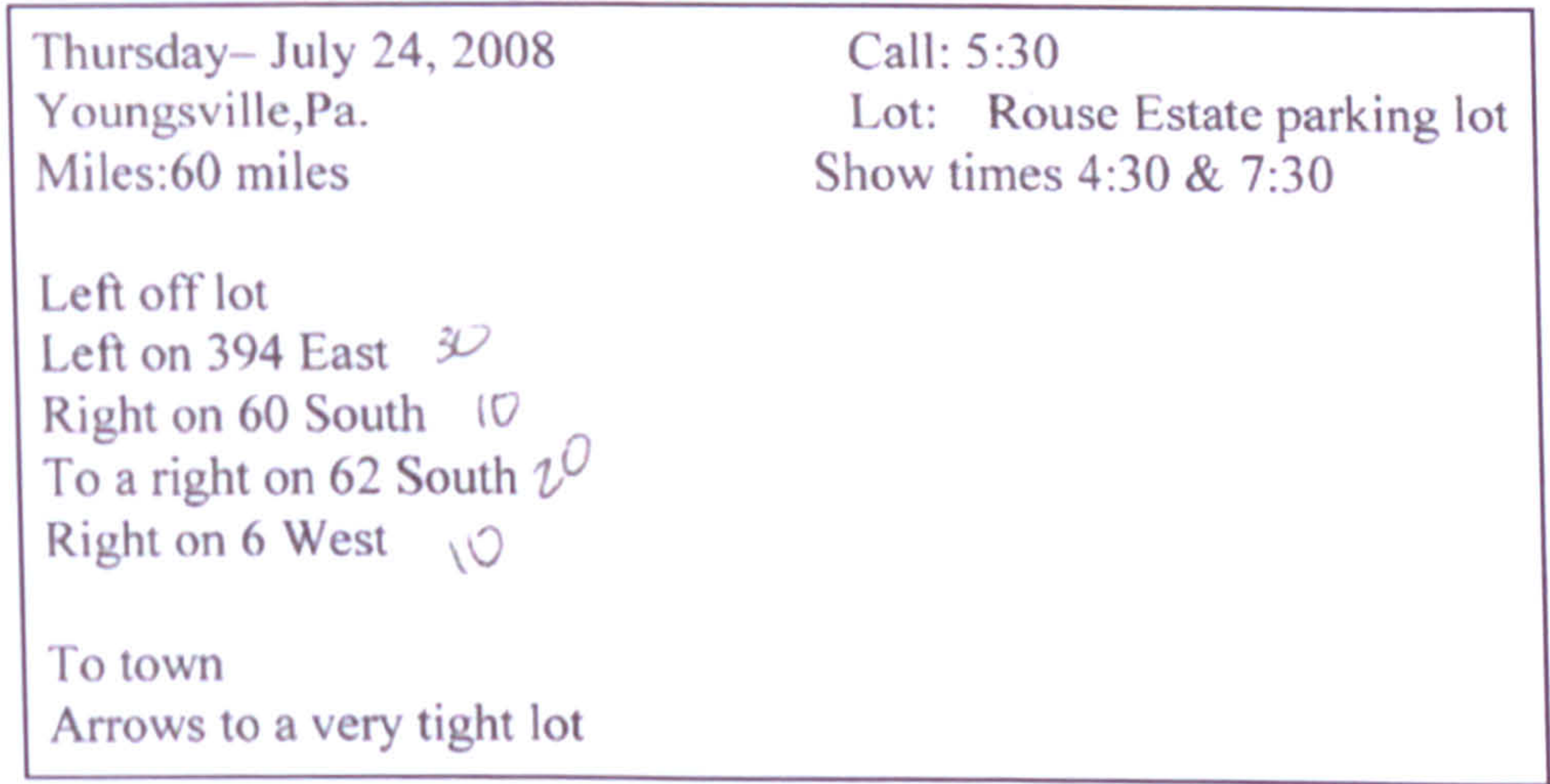


Figure 6.15: Route slip for Youngsville, PA. Again, the notations reflect the miles for each direction.

Disruptions in the ritual of movement and ticketed performance are a constant presence in Kelly Miller Circus, but they are also a necessary presence for the acts of maintenance to provide a flexible, yet recognizable place of Kelly Miller Circus. “This is what I like, I love it, have to work,” was Oscar’s response to the morning shuffle in Springville. In order to maintain itself, Kelly Miller must continual restore and rework its behaviours in order to ensure that it will maintain itself in the future. Through improvisation Kelly Miller Circus ensures that the show will go on, albeit slightly

different, everyday. The acts of maintenance created through moments of improvisation are accepted and expected, or better yet, recognizable patterns of behaviour restored again and again. In this way improvisation has become a ritual of Kelly Miller Circus. Beyond maintaining the overall situation of Kelly Miller, a ritual's "primary function is a kind of collective memory-in/of-action" (Schechner 1985, p113). The next section discusses the role of memory in the performance of stable mobility in the place of Kelly Miller Circus.

Improvised Memory

In this chapter memory, in the form of recalling past experiences, is shown to be key to the acts of maintenance which ensure the continuation of a recognizable Kelly Miller Circus. However, in the preceding chapters, forgetting is also shown to be a part of the daily restoration and reaffirmation of behaviours. In Chapter 4 it is the act of driving that was frequently forgotten or 'lost' to memory. In Chapter 5 it is the effects of the lost drive that were forgotten. In this chapter experiences of past disruptions were not recalled until needed, but as in the other chapters, these were not so much forgotten, but filed away until needed. This chapter also showed that when memories are recalled they may only be partially recalled and then supplemented with other memories to fit the situation. In each of the chapters Kelly Miller Circus is shown to operate with what could be described as an improvised memory of itself and circus tradition. This does not mean that the memory is fabricated or untrue. As we have seen in this chapter, improvisation is not a vehicle of pure creation, but one of maintenance and continuation based on past experiences of the show and individuals. An improvised memory is one that is lived and worked through daily activities. It is a memory full of forgetfulness

and selective memory that is only understood by those that use it (Nora 1989), much in the same way that performance as restored behaviour can only be decoded by those that are part of the tradition being restored (Schechner 2003).

Looking at what is remembered and forgotten in each chapter reveals a pattern of how and why certain experiences are continually recalled and others are continually forgotten. What is remembered and passed on either in stories, advice, or practice are good and mediocre acts, bad weather, difficult lots, and challenging drives. What has not been recalled in detail are good lots, easy drives, good weather, and the rupture of two day stands. The accumulation of these memories are the basis for skills and modes of behaviour, and what they choose to remember and 'forget' allows the show to learn from past experiences (Bergson in Legg 2007, p458). I believe the pattern relates to the creation and use of traces of experience and performance that assist in the restorations of the daily rituals of Kelly Miller Circus.

Traces are vital to the restoration of behaviour (Pearson and Shanks 2001) and to the preservation of memory. With each restoration the behaviour changes based on its context (Schechner 2003), and with each use, traces are susceptible to the wearing away of memory (Pearson and Shanks 2001, p10). This wearing away is a symptom of being repeatedly used but also allows for improvisation of memory either for entertainment purposes in storytelling or for practical purposes in acts of maintenance. The fissure between experience and recall is filled with creativity (Huyssen in Legg 2007, p457). That gap creates a narrative that can be reworked (Hoelscher 2003). It could be argued that remembering a good lot, or an easy drive does not create the skill to deal with a difficult one, while recalling a tight parking situation on a difficult lot allows the Lot Supervisor and 24-Hour Man to restore that behaviour in a way that works for today. The disruption and difficulties of a two day stand are perhaps forgotten in order for the lessons to be learned again and modified for the future. Good and not-so-good acts are

recalled and passed on as a way to learn what is expected and accepted in the ring.

“Performers frequently remember the bad times best: the moments of failure-when it goes wrong...and they have to use all their skill and experience in acts of compensation” (Pearson 2006, p220). Kelly Miller Circus remembers in order to restore the behaviours that are important to the life, that enhance their skills and ability to put on a show and ‘forgets’ in order to move on to the next performance.

The good lots and weather do not present a challenge. The ‘bad’ weather and lots present numerous and varying challenges and require the show to call on their experience and innovative spirit to put the puzzle together in a different way to get the same picture. There are tight lots every season that need to be worked. But even if the show returns the following season, they will be worked again. The Kelly Miller Circus that fit last season is not the same one this season. There are new performers which means new houses and new requirements for spotting. The experiences of last season will serve as a trace for the current performance of spotting, but it will have to be combined with other experiences and memories to work in that time and place.

Lot and weather conditions were a frequent topic of conversation and complaint during fieldwork. I believe that is because they are the elements of a mudshow that pose the greatest threat to the continuation of the recognizable place and performance of Kelly Miller Circus. Together these two elements can strip Kelly Miller of its tent and numerous acts, threatening to render it unrecognizable. The flexible living and working memory, which is recalled and ‘forgotten’ in a pick-and-choose way, sets the stage for current and future performances which are never quite the same but always recognizable as Kelly Miller Circus. In order for memory to endure it must be gone over again and again (Nora 1989, p12). The ever changing weather and lot conditions described in this chapter, which are an inevitable consequence of moving from one location to another,

create a constant stream of disruptions and ruptures that force Kelly Miller Circus to use all its skill, training and memory to ensure that the show will go on.

Conclusion: Fixed Improvisation

Natalie Cainan (see start of chapter) said that the circus changes everyday, its movement is a necessity. For me, her words highlight the role improvisation plays in the performance of stable mobility in Kelly Miller Circus. The movement is necessary. To ensure that it is continuous, flexibility is also necessary to keep Kelly Miller Circus on the road and performing. What Natalie calls tradition may be a series of challenges and improvisations over generations that have made their way into the rituals and living memory of the circus. This culture of movement has, over time, incorporated the inevitable and frequent disruptions and acts of maintenance into a recognizable culture of an American mudshow (Roach 1996a).

This chapter discussed the ways in which improvisation is 'fixed' into the daily ritual of Kelly Miller Circus. The discussion of the improvisations of Glenwood, Arkansas illustrated Kelly Miller's self-imposed 'responsibility to play.' This general directive is one way in which the improvisational process is continually restored and reaffirmed as a reliable tool with which to fix a constant stream of disruption provided by the towns through which Kelly Miller Circus moves. The evidence that acts of maintenance are an expected and accepted tool of circus life is their integration into the lexicon. Circus rigging is a term I heard quite frequently during fieldwork and was always spoken with confidence. Kelly Miller is confident in its ability to improvise a solution, be it for an hour, a day, or a season. So confident are they in this ability that even when an improvisation fails, it still maintains the process of improvisation because

it will inform the next. The four types of improvisation I identified through fieldwork show the tool of flexibility in Kelly Miller to be flexible itself. Each improvisation, be it at the individual or show level needs to create coherence in routine or performance while taking into account the context of the disruption. Sometimes it is creating coherence in a performance space, as we saw in the examples of Glenwood and Gilmer. Sometimes it is creating coherence in the time line dictating performances, as seen in the example of Springville.

Finally, memory is presented as the tool that maintains the acts of maintenance. The ritual of improvisation present within the multiple performances of Kelly Miller Circus brings to light the lived nature of memory and its role in the performance of stable mobility. By using a flexible and selective memory Kelly Miller Circus is able to recreate a recognizable stage each day and restore the behaviours of the day before. In this way, memory reaffirms the flexible behaviours that maintain the performances of mobility in Kelly Miller Circus. Improvisation in both performance and memory is shown to be a stable and continuing way to deal with the ever fluctuating disruption and ruptures experienced while getting down the road.

I was aware of the habit of improvisation in circus life before conducting the fieldwork for this project. However, the extent to which improvisation is used in almost every situation and the reliance on the skill of improvising only became apparent through the experience of fieldwork. By forcing a mobile perspective through the five month ethnography, I became aware of the inherent need for flexibility in every performance and material on the lot. The constant necessity to alter known patterns of performance and material relations may appear to create the common circus representation of unpredictability and chaos. However, in Kelly Miller Circus the integration of flexibility into each performance and material relation through continually restored and reaffirmed improvisational performances creates a stability of, not only

mobility, but of place as well. The significance of this necessary process of improvisation to the concept of stable mobility is the demonstration of how continuing situations of mobility and recognizable stability can be produced by negotiating the continual, yet subtle, disruptions and ruptures to a daily ritual caused by stationary locations. This is a 'flip' to a common relationship between mobile cultures and stationary, or settled, society in which the mobility performances create disruptions to the stationary performances and must be managed. The mobile perspective of the circus shows it to be the materials and landscape and infrastructure of the stationary locations which cause disruption to mobility performances. Through this mobile perspective the disruptions are also managed but they are also folded into the working memory of Kelly Miller Circus in order to assist in the management and negotiation of the inevitable future disruptions that come with getting down the road.

In the following conclusion, I outline the significant contributions of the concept of stable mobility, and this thesis, to theoretical and methodical discussions within Cultural Geography and mobility research more broadly. These contributions stem primarily from using theories of performance and memory to understand how the people of Kelly Miller Circus produce and reproduce their physical movement from town to town, but also how that movement produces and reproduces a stable and recognizable place in which to live and work.

Conclusion: “Getting down the road” with Stable Mobility

On the morning of May 10th in Paulding, Ohio, I was enjoying our usual morning brunch when the conversation turned to the spotting performance of the morning. As I described in Chapter 4, this is a performance almost completely directed by two men. However, most semi-truck drivers on the show know their ‘spot’ based on the other vehicles and years of experience. Once a semi-truck moves onto a grassy field it usually needs to keep moving until it reaches its spot or it gets stuck. That morning at brunch the driver of one particular semi-truck was relating his experience of the morning spotting: He had begun his drive onto the field, as directed by the Lot Supervisor, and as he headed to his spot the 24-Hour Man began to frantically wave him in another direction. The driver continued to his spot, yelling out the window as he did so, “I’ve been getting down the road for 40 years without you, I think I know where to park without your help!” It turns out the 24-Hour Man had mis-identified the truck and the driver was heading in the right direction. We all chuckled at the story and the conversation moved on to the unusual jump planned for the evening. The spotting performance described could speak to many of the concerns of this project, the role of gestures cueing particular performances, the confirmation and restoration of memory, or the role of the stage in determining practice, but what made it onto the calendar that day was the quote ‘getting down the road’ (refer back to fig. 2.6).

Throughout the season I learned that the phrase ‘down the road’ has multiple meanings in the circus. It can refer to an individual’s circus experience, as seen in the example above. It refers to the present situation, as in ‘the show is getting down the road.’ And it also refers to the future, as in ‘see you down the road’ (fig. C.1). In a way, this phrase demonstrates the concept of stable mobility in the place of Kelly Miller Circus. It speaks to the memories and past experience of individuals which shape their

present, and future, memories and experiences. It speaks to the maintenance of the processes that keep the circus moving from town to town during the season and it presents an assurance that those processes will continue into the future and ensure that we will meet again. Underlying each phrase is the continued renewal and maintenance of the performances and processes which move the circus down the road.

By asking specific questions about how situations of mobility and stability are maintained within Kelly Miller Circus I discovered the importance of *performance* and *memory* processes to the continual production and restoration of mobility processes. The daily rhythms and routes of Kelly Miller Circus presented in Chapter 4, when approached and understood as repeated performative rituals of movement, illustrate how the rhythms and routes are made specific for each daily circumstance as well as how they blend into one general, ‘original’ rhythm restored daily. This engagement with performance and memory in the investigation of mobility processes revealed the presence of *reaffirmed behaviours* and performances which maintain the mobility and memory processes of Kelly Miller Circus.

In this way the concept of stable mobility could be understood as stable/mobility, one word. It is not understanding mobility as free flowing, nor is it understanding stability as completely fluid, but incorporating *flexibility* into

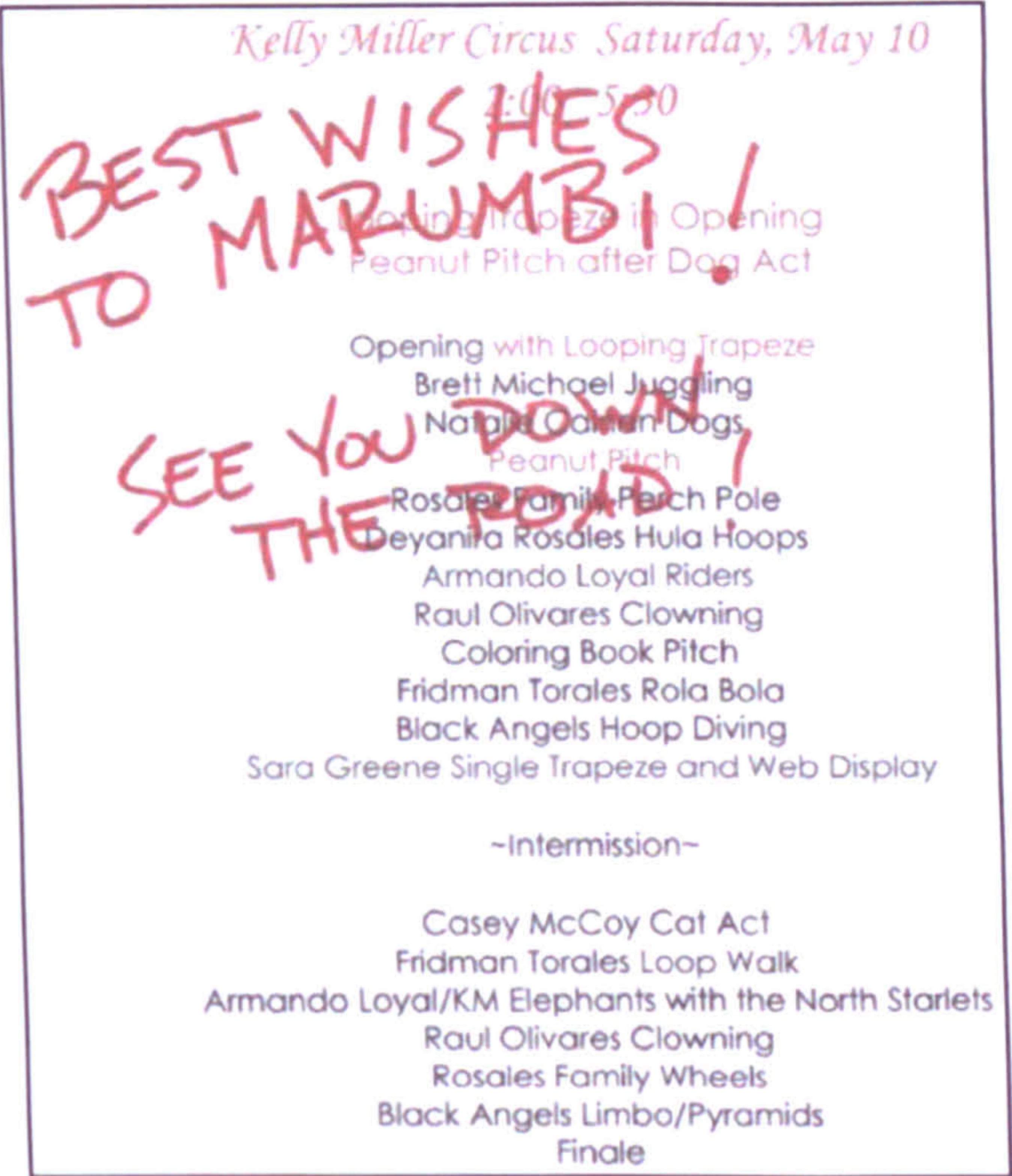


Figure C.1: Paulding, OH on May 10. The second appearance of “down the road” which also prompted the entry in the calendar notes.

understandings of both mobility and stability. It is a concept grounded in continually restored and reaffirmed behaviours and relationships between the people, materials, and memories of Kelly Miller Circus. This relationship is evident in the drives presented in Chapter 4 on July 12th and June 20th which presented the arrows and route slip as materials which restore and reaffirm the physical movement and practice of driving while also providing flexibility for the drivers to reshuffle themselves while driving or leave the route altogether in order to visit a service stationed remembered.

The concept of stable mobility also is shown to utilize processes and materials of performance which require forgetting. In Chapter 5 the forgetting, or leaving out, of mobility processes and memories created a rupture in performance, but also reaffirmed the necessity of those mobility processes and in so doing, presented a necessary role of forgetting in the maintenance of mobility and stability in Kelly Miller Circus. Grounding the concept of stable mobility in Kelly Miller Circus presents a notion of stability and mobility as continuing flexible situations that maintain their recognizability through *improvisation*. The examples of the gymnasium show in Glenwood, AR and the split lot of Springville, NY presented in Chapter 6 illustrated how performances of improvisation are utilized in both practice and memory to create specific stages and performances for the daily conditions but also how each specific improvisation also restored and reaffirmed performances and a living memory.

Privileging the perspective of the circus, which is both mobile and performative, in the creation of this project presented new and interesting ways in which to approach the cultural mobility of an American circus. The case of the circus is virtually absent from geographical discussions, beyond brief mention in partnership with carnivals and Travellers (Hetherington 2000; Relph 1976; Sibley 1995). This research not only presents a circus as a place and culture interesting to geographical discussions of mobility, performance, and memory but also distinguishes it from other mobile cultures

by presenting its particular and specific processes of mobility thus illustrating how mobility research must be careful when bundling conditions of mobility as similar. Approaching mobility through a, perhaps unusual, mobile perspective in the culture of a 'new' case of the circus presents interesting discussions about the production and stabilization of mobility through the perhaps unlikely processes of staged and everyday performance and memory which are rarely used in conjunction in mobility research (Cresswell 2006c; Gardner 2004; Hetherington 2000; Nicholson 2002).

As an example, if I had not forced a mobile perspective in this project I do not think improvisation would have been recognized as such an important tool to the maintenance of mobility in Kelly Miller Circus. This finding in particular presents a significant contribution of the stable mobility concept to mobility research and Cultural Geography in the way in which 'disruption' is used in order to maintain mobility processes which in turn stabilize performances of place and memory within Kelly Miller Circus. As I discussed earlier, mobile cultures are frequently approached in cultural geographic research as a disruption to the sedentary or 'settled' communities through which they move. That is not to say that all these engagements argue that mobility is representative of disruption but they do position mobile communities in a particular way by juxtaposing them to non-mobile communities which tends to lead to a discussion about the inherent disruption of mobility to settled society and not necessarily to the mobile subject. In this research, by taking the perspective of the circus, my questions were not necessarily about the relationships the circus had with the communities through which it moved but about the relationships within the community that allowed and enabled it to move. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the mobility processes of Kelly Miller Circus revealed a constant negotiation of disruption to routine and stage caused by continually moving to new locations. However, what is perhaps surprising are the ways in which the constant presence of disruption is folded into the processes of

mobility in Kelly Miller Circus through practiced and assured flexibility in not only the materials of the show but the relationships with those materials as well.

In Chapter 4 I discussed how the performance of the layout and its direction and spotting of vehicles can create a stability of performance (and staging) while also allowing for disruptions and flexibility which worked to reaffirm particular performances in the maintenance of the show. In Chapter 5 I discussed how the disruption of a two day stand was created through a combination of selected memory and absent mobility processes, but also served as a way to reaffirm the necessity of particular processes of mobilization to the stability of Kelly Miller's overall ritual of movement. And finally, in Chapter 6 I argued that the stable process which kept Kelly Miller moving down the road despite the continuous occurrence of disruption, was a fixed, yet flexible, process of improvisation. In each of these chapters I presented an understanding of mobility's relationship to the presence of disruption as one that allowed for the continuation of movement through subtle transformations and readjustments of performances. From the mobile circus perspective the daily disruptions created by the stationary roads and lots on which it moves are accepted and mundane, but also expected and transformative traces for the restoration and reaffirmation of daily performances of stable mobility.

Initially, the general concept of stable mobility, a situation of constant movement that perpetuates itself through its processes of mobility, was inspired by my memories about the circus stories that filled my childhood. As the project developed the case of the circus provided more than just the concept of stable mobility, but also the processes through which to investigate this particular concept. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, investigations into the mobility of performative groups has led to secondary discussions about how stability and mobility of situation are maintained in conjunction (O'Reilly and Crutcher 2006). Approaching the concept of stable mobility through the

performance theory of restored behaviour provided a way to think about the repetition of mobility processes as not only restored behaviours altered for each circumstance, but also as reaffirmed behaviours maintained within the specific mobility processes of Kelly Miller Circus through their constant repetition. This theory of performance also allowed for the integration of a lived memory into a discussion about the mobility processes maintained by Kelly Miller. A lived memory, reworked at every restoration due to the particular context of each stage, allows for the resulting performances of improvisation to be understood as acts of maintenance. These two processes of stable mobility, reaffirmed behaviours and improvisation, were made apparent through the questions and fieldwork of this thesis which embraced a mobile, circus, perspective.

The processes of reaffirmed behaviours and improvisation observed in Kelly Miller Circus present another way to understand the production and meaning of mobility. Mobility is routinely figured as adventure, tedium, education, freedom, modern, privileged, threatening, dysfunctional, inauthentic, rootless, liberating, antifoundational, and transgressive (Cresswell 2010).³⁹ In the case of Kelly Miller Circus mobility is produced and understood as necessary and stabilizing. The necessity of mobility is evident not only in Natalie Cainan's quote at the beginning of Chapter 6, but also in the way in which the ability to move is incorporated into every material and action of the lot which together produce Kelly Miller's particular formulation of mobility. From the careful construction of props to fit exactly in the storage compartments of homes, to the act of heating a coffee thermos in the evening, or to learning how to cook dinner, shower, and prepare for a performance using only the electricity provided by a 12 volt car battery because the lot for that day does not allow everyone to plug into the show's generator, each is haunted by the drive and the responsibility to play. In order for the show to go on, the circus moves to another town

³⁹ Adey P 2010; Cloke P, Milbourne P and Widdowfield R 2003; D'Andrea A 2006; Merriman P 2007; Mitchell D 2001; Sibley D 1995; Urry J 2007; Vanderbeck R M 2005.

in order to find another audience. However, in order for the people of Kelly Miller Circus to continue to produce a show, the bodily practice of living and working on the road must also go on. The concept of stable mobility presents an understanding of mobility as necessary and stabilizing which incorporates other meanings of education, tedium, and perhaps romantic ideas of freedom. Where it differs is a figuring of mobility that claims when a mobile perspective is taken in theory and practice, mobility processes present a necessary and stable situation.

The five month ethnography of Kelly Miller Circus' 2008 season was key to understanding how the concept of stable mobility could be understood in practice as well as in theory. Initially, when I placed myself in the mobile community of Kelly Miller Circus, the goal was to find a way to ask better interview questions about being mobile. By using my experience of movement as 'props' I hoped to really 'get at' the show's feelings and understandings of their own movement during interviews. I thought that my secondary knowledge of circus life had prepared me sufficiently to step right into a working circus and know what kinds of questions to ask. In practice, it took me a long time to learn how to move, and work, and live, and perform and most days I was struggling to hold it all together. What I slowly began to realize was that the necessary continual repetition of each day was the stabilizing factor in my own experience. The show was going to keep moving to the next town. If I did not show up, someone else would step in to run the music. The show would go on with, or without, me. The questions I needed to ask to understand how Kelly Miller maintained its movement were not about producing physical movement necessarily but about maintaining stability while also producing movement. That was around the time I threw my research questions out the door. Interestingly, by forcing a mobile perspective in my research methods I found that in order to understand how Kelly Miller Circus kept moving I had to pay attention to how they also kept 'still' in a sense. Again, like the

notions of stable and recognizable, the notion of *still* here requires a bit of flexibility and is perhaps better understood as temporary and continual immobility.

What the ethnography made clear was that a *mobile perspective*, like the concept of mobility, is not just about adding physical movement to the research. Working through a mobile perspective is about taking the perspective of a mobile subject and looking at what maintains its movement. I do not believe it always requires literally taking on a mobile subject position, but in the case of this thesis, physically forcing a mobile experience produced, I believe, significant contributions to understanding mobility and stability processes of mobile cultures. Surprisingly, in the case of Kelly Miller Circus, I found that observing how the show recreated the same stage for itself each day in the form of the lot, the tent, the acts, and the houses, was more revealing to the processes of mobility than observing their actual movement from town to town. However, that is not to say that the morning drives were not important to the way in which the stages are created. As Chapter 4 and 5 demonstrate, the physical movement from town to town is the quiet power behind each performance. This may seem an obvious observation about a mobile community, but I did not assume it from the start. This understanding of the drive became evident through observing and experiencing the continual process of becoming mobile and immobile. I do not think that this will be the case with all research linked to the stable mobility concept but, in the case of Kelly Miller Circus, observing and experiencing how the show was 'still' at each lot also revealed how the show kept moving to a new lot.

Regretfully, by the time I finally learned how to move, work, live and perform, and also really started to feel comfortable and excited about where my research was going, it was time for me to return to sedentary life. In hindsight, I wish I had stayed with the show until November. This would have provided more time to gather detailed data about the daily modifications to the stable stages and to continue to develop an

interview method that was more successful in drawing out personal experiences rather than general facts. More time also could have presented more opportunities to perform in the ring which turned out to be a valuable research method during my limited experience. However, on the last point, I was only given the opportunity to perform because I was leaving and so the opportunity may not have presented itself until I left in November. There is no question that this project, and future projects, would benefit from an entire season of research data in the form of photographs, video, interview quotes, and observations from 65 additional lots and related performances. However, I do not believe that this project and thesis were hampered in any way by leaving Kelly Miller Circus after five months. The research conducted in those five months was extremely illuminating to the concept of stable mobility and how it can be applied in theory and practice. Additionally, based on the amount of 'data' I accumulated during the five months (see Appendix 2), an additional 65 lots worth of intensive research had the potential of creating a burden of data that would inevitably created an issue of 'data handling' that would not have been conducive to the time constraints of a PhD project. On my last day, as I said goodbye to one particular person that had provided a lot of support early in the season, she said, "We'll let you leave for now so that we'll see you down the road later." If she is right, I will have the opportunity to return to the circus to expand on the findings of this project which I believe are significant to discussions about cultures of mobility.

In addition to the specific contributions of this research discussed above, this research also generally contributes to the growing field of mobilities research and its interest in the different experiences and practices of people and materials moving through space and time at a variety of scales, by presenting yet another 'mobility-system' of the circus and its processes of mobility (Adey 2010; Cresswell 2010; Urry 2007). The theoretical engagements of performance and memory with empirical data

gathered ‘on the move’ advance discussions in cultural geography and mobility research concerning the production of mobile communities within ‘settled’ societies while adding an element of maintenance and necessity to the discussion (Hetherington 2000; Shubin and Swanson 2008). While illuminating another way to approach and investigate mobile cultures through the concept of stable mobility, this thesis also contributes to ongoing discussions about how Cultural Geography might conceptualize and approach research about mobile cultures and how mobile cultures might conceptualize space and place (Cresswell 2006a; Cresswell 2010). The following discussions outline more specifically the significant contributions and advances this thesis makes to thinking about the culture and work of the American circus, to the increasing field of mobility research and mobile methods, and to Cultural Geography research in the area of mobile and performative cultures.

The *first question* posed by this thesis asked about the relatively stable work that maintained mobility in a circus. Each empirical chapter highlighted a specific process which works to maintain the physical movement of Kelly Miller Circus from town to town, in the form of reaffirmed behaviours, the idea of the stage, and improvisation as acts of maintenance. However, Chapter 4 specifically looked at the ritual of movement, known patterns of performance that maintain Kelly Miller’s physical movement, and described, generally, how each process, mentioned above, is folded into the ongoing daily production of Kelly Miller Circus. The ritual of movement presented in Chapter 4 consisted of bundles of performances, each cueing the next, within the continually restored ritual. The chapter discussed how an understanding of performances becoming reaffirmed through their continual restoration was cued by the specificity of each lot and route and the resulting alterations to each performance in the restoration of the recognizable and stable stage of Kelly Miller. By following the ritual over nine lots,

each process of reaffirmed performance, stage production, and improvisation is shown to play a stable role in the maintenance of Kelly Miller's culture of mobility as well as being flexible in the way in which they are accomplished.

The chapter used the physical movement between lots, in the form of driving, as a centre point to discuss how the resulting staging performances of demobilizing and mobilizing work to erase the memory of the drive as well as restore and alter it through the course of the daily restoration of the ritual of movement. Using processes of performance and memory recall and implementation to understand the daily movements of Kelly Miller Circus presents an understanding of the production of mobility which speaks to its preservation in the present as well as how it will be maintained into the future. This presents a significant contribution to academic and non-academic circus research. This research discusses how the everyday performances of a working circus contribute to its continuation as opposed to focusing on the performances in the ring and their significance to identity formation (Carmeli 2003; Carmeli 2006; Little 2006) or lamenting the disappearance and transformation of the circus tradition (Carmeli 2001; Hammarstrom 2008). This research presents a description of circus life that takes into consideration both the everyday logistical performances as well as the performances in the ring to move beyond the romantic view of a dying, traditional lifestyle and present a view of a contemporary lifestyle perfectly capable of adapting to their surroundings and circumstances in order to continue getting down the road.

The *second question* addressed by this thesis is about understanding how the processes of mobilization, described above as reaffirmed behaviours, staging, and improvisation, maintain a stability of situation while also maintaining the physical movement of the show. Again, each chapter addresses this point to some degree. For example, Chapter 4 illustrated how the actual movement from town to town can become almost invisible due to its constant repetition and how the invisibility and blurring of

each day's specifics into a ritual of 'Just one day' creates the production of a continually recognizable memory of the place of Kelly Miller Circus. Chapter 6 described how the continual movement from town to town creates a necessary stream of disruption that stabilizes the performance and process of improvisation. However, Chapter 5 in particular explored how the processes of mobilization create a stable stage of Kelly Miller Circus by describing how the multiple stages within Kelly Miller and its ritual of movement are affected when processes of mobilization, such as reaffirmed performances of mobilizing, driving, and demobilizing are shuffled or missed out in the daily ritual of movement. In exploring what happens when Kelly Miller Circus stops moving, this chapter showed the processes of mobilization as necessary to the maintenance of the show's stability by describing how the stages and related performances were made subtly, yet significantly, unstable due to the 'missing' processes between days. Each stage is shown to be cued by moments within the ritual of movement as well as cueing moments within the ritual. The discussion of the stage and the performance of staging in this chapter also illustrated how the improvisation process is used to 'correct' the effects of the missing mobilization processes. The relationship between producing a stage for mobility performances and process of improvisation in order to stabilize those stages also provides a way to think about how cultures of mobility utilize stationary locations to maintain performances of mobility. I believe this to be a significant finding for mobility research as well as an argument for mobile methods.

I believe that the discussions and arguments of Chapter 5 about the necessity of mobilization processes in creating stability within a mobile community is directly related to the use of a mobile method and perspective presenting the idea of stable stages as a way to understand mobility processes. Within the discussion of the role of processes of mobilization for the creation of stable stages, illustrated through the

individual performances of a two day stand, was also a discussion about how Kelly Miller used the temporary stages of each town to reaffirm their ritual of movement by being affected by each town on the route, but not tied to any in particular. Each town presents a different stage on which Kelly Miller Circus needs to produce their own stage of the tent, midway, backyard, frontyard, etc. The differences of each lot require that Kelly Miller have the ability to restore their mobilization processes in such a way that is specific to each lot yet maintains their recognizable stage. This discussion presents a significant contribution to mobility research by understanding how a relatively self-contained 'mobility-system' is continually maintained by its own mobilization processes but also affected by each place it moves through.

I believe the performative concepts of the stage and improvisation present a way to conceptualize a continually mobile lifestyle that maintains its mobility through the difference presented by each stationary lot as well as each experience of mobility in the creation of the lot without falling into the traps of metaphors about roots or nomads. Both metaphors, which for Cresswell mark moments within a mobility research trajectory, presented a picture of mobile people and communities that were almost incapable of connecting to the settled societies through which they moved. They are viewed as either unwilling or unable to be affected by sedentary life. The sedentary metaphor of roots saw this inability as a problem, the nomadic metaphor praised it as a liberating act. What stable mobility in the place of Kelly Miller Circus tells us is that this particular mobile place and community is indeed affected by, and able to connect with, each stationary place through which it moves while also sustaining its mobile lifestyle.

The *third question* of the thesis is about detailing the significance of flexibility in the concept of stable mobility and its production in practice. In the above discussions of the research questions of this project I mention the necessity and presence of

flexibility in the maintenance of the mobility and stability of Kelly Miller Circus. Through discussions and examples of behaviours restored and performance reaffirmed through a constant process of partial remembering and forgetting, Chapter 6 discusses how the flexibility and improvisation described in each of the other empirical engagements are understood as acts of maintenance for the concept and practice of stable mobility of Kelly Miller Circus. The four types of improvisation outlined in the chapter show just how flexible this particular process of mobility is as well as how integral it is to the maintenance of the ritual of movement, reaffirmation of performance, improvisation, and production of staging in Kelly Miller Circus. This presents a performance of practical memory, as opposed to historical or memorial, which not only preserves Kelly Miller's past, but also works to maintain it in the present and prepares for its future.

The constant presence of improvisation highlights the necessity of difference and flexibility to the maintenance of a continuing situation of movement as well as the continuing recognizability of situation. The four types of improvisation at work in Kelly Miller Circus present the ideas of disruption and rupture as almost mundane and necessary in the work of performance and memory to maintain Kelly Miller Circus. The continual need to refocus, or reaffirm, the performances within the ritual of mobility, caused by the disruptions and ruptures of daily movement, maintains not only the continual situation of movement but the living memory of that situation as well. Flexibility, or improvisation, is 'built-in' to the materials of the show as well as the performances which utilize the materials. The tent is built with an ability to re-arrange the entrances and exits as the lot dictates. The performance of the layout is dependent upon the ability to spot the vehicles in a variety of patterns to account for the day's lot but also maintain a recognizable stage (fig. C.2). The running order is created with the ability to change at a moment's notice due to weather or lot conditions. In this way, the

processes of improvisation and related acts of maintenance reinforce the place of Kelly Miller Circus through constant, yet flexible, reengagement with a living memory that reaffirms the daily and seasonal performances of the show.

This research and the resulting findings are the product of a continual conversation between theoretical concepts and the empirical case of Kelly Miller Circus. The theory of restored behaviour creates a way to understand how the repetition



Figure C.2: Frisco, TX on March 21. No stakes were driven on this lot. The tent was completely secured by the surrounding vehicles.

of physical movement could be understood to be stable and flexible. The habit of the circus to tell stories as a way of teaching itself how to repeat and continue that movement lead to the inclusion of memory as a process of mobilization which reflects the use of memory in the restoration of behaviour. The materials of the circus that are manipulated each day in the production of physical movement and a performance stage lead to theories about how memory is stored and recovered in the materials and experiential traces of past performances. This continual conversation, inspired by a mobile perspective, presents the concept of stable mobility as one that views mobility as necessary for the maintenance of recognizably stable situations. Through the case of Kelly Miller, processes of performance and memory are positioned as vital to the

concept of stable mobility and its understanding of processes of mobilization as stabilizing performances.

This research presents a significant shift in understanding the maintenance of mobile communities and particularly ways of thinking about the circus that does not involve the usual discussions of the carnivalesque but validates the performative and mobile lifestyle of circus as one of continual ordered and specific, yet flexible, maintenance work. The production of stability of community and place through careful and patterned improvisations which work to maintain recognizable patterns of behaviour and interaction is useful beyond mobility research, specifically, in the use of traces in the recreation of performance. The way in which materials, scars, smells, or sounds inform the experience and production of place, be it mobile or not, is a way to apply the concept of stable mobility, continually restored and reaffirmed behaviours and relationships between people, materials, and memory, to discussions of the ways in which places are produced and experienced by a range of groups for a range of purposes. Taking a circus view of how mobility, or any other spatial phenomenon, is maintained through the intertwining processes of performance as reaffirmed behaviour and memory as improvised through traces can present another way of understanding experiences and productions of geographical phenomena that are flexible and continually restored and reworked in such a way as to be stable, yet also specific at each restoration. Additionally, through the concept of stable mobility the work and performances of circus people could perhaps escape its continual linkage to the carnivalesque and chaos metaphors by being presented as a carefully ordered and choreographed pattern of behaviours restored in particular and careful ways.

This thesis described and discussed how the living memory of the circus shapes its present and future performances, both in the ring and on the road. The thesis demonstrated, through analytical discussions and performative presentational styles,

how Kelly Miller Circus maintains its particular form of mobility but also how it assures its continuation into the future through the continual reproduction of a daily routine and rhythm of mobility that is consistent as well as flexible. The mobile perspective presented throughout this thesis was about viewing the lived relationships and processes of mobility from the place of mobility while considering the concerns and practices and meanings of mobility for the people that are moving. But it was also about a mobile method and finding a way to not only recover the practices and experiences of being mobile but also about finding a way to present those practices and experiences in a way that reflected and performed the ways in which mobility processes are produced again and again in Kelly Miller Circus. This perspective revealed that in Kelly Miller Circus it is not always the physical movement that allows for, and maintains, the reproduction of mobility processes. This research illustrated that it is the lived relationships between the people, materials, and memories that maintain and preserve the performative culture of mobility in Kelly Miller Circus. This thesis showed that by continually becoming temporarily immobile, through processes of reaffirmed performances of staging and improvisation, Kelly Miller Circus will continue to get down the road.

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Appendix 1

Glossary of Circus Terms

24-Hour Man-the person travelling a day ahead of the show, marking the route, laying out the lot, checking permits, and scouting local amenities.

Acts-refers to the individual performances in the **ring**, as well as the people that perform them.

Aerialist-individual that not only performs an aerial act but also has the core skills to perform any aerial act.

Animal Department-the geographical area of the animal enclosure on the **midway**, as well as the group of trainers and grooms that work with the show animals.

Arrows-the white and red convoy arrows posted at the side of the road indicating the route to the next lot. See also **Route**.

Backdoor-the curtains at the rear of the tent which lead to the **backyard** and serve as the performers' entrance to the tent and **ring**.

Backyard-the geographical area in which performers' houses are parked, usually oriented around the **bandwagon** and backdoor.

Bandstand-the portable stage at the back of the **bandwagon** situated behind the **ring** which holds the sound equipment and musicians.

Bandwagon-the trailer parked at the rear of the ring around which the backdoor is organized. Serves as the lighting booth, warm up area, and small prop and costume storage during the day. Holds the lights, ring, elephant tubs, electrical cord, blocks and backdoor curtains during the drive.

Bleachers-the portable seating for the majority of the audience fixed to trailers. See also **Seat Wagon**.

Blocks-double or triple pulleys and associated rope.

Blown Arrow-an unnoticed arrow 'blown by' while driving between lots.

Boards-refers to the collection of wooden boards each house carries in order to level house trailers or provide traction.

Booking Agent-individuals or teams of people responsible for identifying potential sponsors and selling 'circus day' to each sponsor. Most work is done at the end of the season or during the off months, although they do also travel a few weeks ahead of the show attempting to fill holes in the route.

Bunkhouse-living compartments included in almost every show-owned semi-truck and trailer. The **cookhouse** truck holds the largest and is often referred to as the bunkhouse.

Butcher-food and souvenir vendors that work in the tent during the show.

Call time-the time at which drivers and vehicles are expected to be prepared to drive off the current lot.

Circus Fans-a national organization of circus enthusiasts organized into regional 'tents.' They are common visitors to lots and occasionally provide a lunch or dinner for

the show. They tend to be the repository of circus history and current statistics. They are commonly afforded greater access to the backyard area and performers.

Circus Wagon-these are wooden wagons which held animals or people and were pulled by teams of horses in the circus parades of the Golden Age.

Clown White-a specific type of oil-based theatrical make-up used to create clown faces.

Concessions Truck-a show-owned semi-truck and trailer which serves as one side of the midway and holds the food sales windows. It also stored the souvenirs for the toy stand and held a bunkroom for the butchers.

Cookhouse-a show-owned semi-truck and trailer which held the show kitchen which puts out a simple breakfast at call time, a lunch at 11:00, and dinner at intermission of the first show free of charge. The yellow and red striped tent secured to the side serves as the classroom for the children of the show every morning from 9:00 to 11:00 as well as a general meeting area for parties or religious services. The majority of the truck serves as the main living quarters for the tent crew with a series of bunks and a shower and sink. It also holds a smaller generator that can power houses and the kitchen.

Donniker- the portable toilets provided for the audience by the show, also used to refer to the waste tanks of houses. There is no known origin of the word (Fox and Parkinson 1969, p30).

Elephant Tubs-the circular steel stools used in the elephant act and for elephant foot grooming and maintenance.

First of May-refers to someone that is new to the circus life. However it does not always refer to the length of time in the circus, but the quality or competence of circus work and life. The name refers to the historical traditional start of season in May.

Frontdoor-the public entrance to the tent marked by a red and yellow marquee and ticket gates.

Frontyard-the geographical area in which the houses of **midway** employees are positioned.

Generator Truck-a show-owned semi-truck and trailer that holds the primary generator for the show, three living quarters and a common shower. See also **Plant**.

Groom-an individual that works as an assistant and apprentice to an Animal Trainer. The title does not necessarily refer to the act of grooming an animal, as in the case of a Tiger Groom.

Hoof Truck-a show owned semi-truck and trailer that transports the show owned hoof stock of ponies, camels, donkeys, llama and horses. It also serves as storage for hay and equipment for the Animal Department and holds three living quarters.

House-refers to the living accommodation of trailers, motorhomes, converted buses or semi-truck trailers. For many, this mobile accommodation is their house in the off-season as well. Also refers to the tent, as in 'Front-of-house' or 'full house.'

Jigger-ratcheted cables that secure the cupola, or peak, of the tent and the four main poles. These ultimately also serve as the ‘stationary’ points of rigging for any aerial equipment.

John Robinson-when a show is cut short while in progress. The name comes from a circus boss in the Golden Age that was famous for cutting the show short in order to leave town before bill collectors arrived.

Jump-refers to the drive between lots. The word comes from ‘jumping’ onto the train cars as they pulled out of the railroad sidings toward the next town.

Layout-the organization of the vehicles and materials of the circus specific to each lot.

Learning the Ropes-refers to learning how to live and work circus. It is said to come from learning how to secure the ropes of the tent. However, it is also a term used in the sport of boxing.

Light Boxes-steel boxes which hold the theatrical and emergency lights for the tent and are secured to the quarter poles.

Lights-refers to the presence of electricity in the houses. See also **Generator Truck and Plant**.

Lot-refers to the 300ft by 300ft space the circus occupies for the day in each town and the conditions of the lot as well as the surrounding town and amenities. These range from car parks, to abandoned fields, to city parks, rodeo or fairgrounds, baseball fields, or sport practice fields.

Lot & License-refers to a town and lot which has no sponsor. The circus obtains all the permits itself and receives all the profits.

Lot Supervisor-responsible for the organization of the lot in the morning and escorting fire, building, food, and safety inspectors around the lot. Takes a part in making last minute decisions about moving to a new lot, changing layout, or pulling off a lot at night.

Mechanic-the safety harness used in performance.

Midway-the geographical area that includes the Concession Truck, Office, Animal Department and animal attractions, etc.

Mudshow-historically, this designation referred to shows that navigated roads, not rails, and played small towns. Practically, it refers to a circus that works out in the elements, under the tent. All the vehicles have to be able to navigate anything from a city highway to country dirt roads. The travel, set-up and execution needs to be able to deal with, among other things, muddy lots.

North Starlet-collectively refers to the showgirls of John Ringling North's Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. The name was restored to refer to the showgirls of Kelly Miller Circus after John Ringling North II bought the show in 2007.

Opening Day-first official show of the season.

Opening Spec-refers to the display, or spectacle, of stars and talent en mass at the beginning of the show. The Opening Spec was a hallmark of John Ringling North's Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus.

Packing Down-usually refers to the activities of individual families storing and securing their belongs in their houses in preparation for driving. See also **Teardown**.

Perch Pole-an act in which the performer climbs a pole supported by another performer's shoulder and/or head and performs acts of balance.

Performance Department-refers to the employees involved in the production of the ticketed performance.

Performance Director-responsible for determining the **running order** of the show as well as serving as the manager of the performance department and directing opening specs and productions. Usually also serves as **Ringmaster**.

Pie Car-food prepared after the final show, usually by someone other than the cook, for purchase by employees.

Plant-see Generator Truck.

Pole Truck-a show-owned semi-truck and trailer that transports the tent poles, donnikers, extra bleachers, Animal Department barriers, and the small tow motor referred to as the 'bobcat.' This truck also holds a generator powerful enough to run most of the show. One of the only trucks that does not hold a living accommodation.

Preferred Seats-plastic chairs arranged around the ring. Also referred to as ring-side seating. Preferred seating tickets are an additional \$3 each.

Production-refers to an ensemble performance, usually at the end of the first half of the show, which includes a variety of stars and acts organized around a theme or storyline.

Pulling Hoses-refers to the job of filling the water tanks of each house twice a day and connecting the cookhouse and communal showers to the local water supply.

Pulling Off-usually refers to the act of packing down and leaving a lot in the evening in order to maintain the integrity of the lot or ensure a timely arrival at the next lot.

Pump Truck-a small flat bed truck which pumps out the donnikers and carries a collection of spare tires.

Quarter Poles-medium length poles positioned approximately a quarter of the way into the radius of the tent. These poles support the lighting of the show.

Road Office-a converted box trailer parked at the front of the midway that houses the business of the show as well as the ticket box office.

Route-refers to the individual directions between each lot as well as the overall seasonal schedule of dates and towns.

Route Slip-a piece of paper with directions to, and information about, the next day's lot

Ring-the performance space inside the tent.

Ring Curb-the proper name for the 42 foot diameter performance ring.

Ringling-Five brothers from Baraboo, Wisconsin widely considered (within the community) to be the kings of the American Circus tradition and responsible for creating a clean, family friendly image of circus.

Ring Mat-a round piece of vinyl slightly smaller than the diameter of the ring which provides a performance surface. Removed for large animal acts.

Ringmaster-the announcer and narrator for the show. See also Performance Director

Rola Bola-an act of balance. Standing on a board supported by a series of cylinders, usually performed on a an adjustable platform which provides a flat surface regardless of the ground condition.

Running Order-the order of acts, promotions, and acknowledgements in the show.

Seat Wagon-the common name used for the portable bleachers.

Shop Truck-a box truck which contains basic equipment for vehicle repairs.

Show-refers to the performance in the ring as well as the circus as a whole. The Kelly Miller Show refers to the people, management, and reputation as well as the ticketed performance.

Snake Show-a midway attraction of very large snakes. Also refers to the trailer in which the snakes are held that also has a separate living accommodation and storage space.

Spool Truck-refers to a truck mounted with a large spool which unrolls the tent across the lot. The original spool wagon is said to have been invented in 1912 by Bill 'Edison of the circus' Curtis for the large railroad shows

Spotting-refers to the act of directing vehicles to their spot, or parking space, on the lot.

Stake Driver-refers to the mechanical hammer mounted on the back of the flatbed truck that tows the tent trailer.

Style-refers to a performer's gesture following a trick or animal behaviour which signals applaud from the crowd. Sometimes referred to as the 'TA-DA.'

Styling-refers to the manner of style.

Tent Crew-responsible for the raising and dismantling of the tent and made up of the prop crew, butchers, and ushers. The tent crew on Kelly Miller Circus has been made up of the same guys for almost 10 years.

Teardown-the dismantling, packing, and securing of the materials of the circus and preparing vehicles for the morning drive.

Title-the name of a circus. See also **Show**.

Transportation Manager-responsible for collecting driver's logs, managing the show fuel budget, and monitoring the performance of the show vehicles. On Kelly Miller, the Transport Manager was also a general purchaser for the show.

Trouper-a traditional term for someone that lives and works circus fully by taking pride in their life and work and deals with the hardships without too much complaint and is willing to pitch in whenever necessary

Towner-an outsider to the circus, a member of the town.

Toy Stand-the name given to the souvenir stand positioned behind the road office on the midway.

Two Day Stand-refers to remaining on a lot for two performance days instead of the original one day.

Water Pump-a small device in each house which provides water pressure when using the water tank.

Web-refers to the cotton stuffed hose or canvas covered rope which is used in aerial productions and to ascend to aerial rigging.

Wheels of Destiny-a piece of circus equipment which is also referred to as a pendulum which reflects its movement.

Winterquarters-a geographical area where circus vehicles and equipment are stored for the off-season and prepared for the following season. Some winterquarters also have areas for houses to hook up to power and water and rehearsal spaces.

In addition to daily use during fieldwork, the following sources were consulted to produce this glossary:

Circus World Museum

Robert L. Parkinson Circus Library and Research Center

International Circus Hall of Fame

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus Circuswork Education Center

Davis J M 2002 The circus age: culture and society under the American big top. The University of North Carolina Press

Fox C and Parkinson T 1969 The Circus in America. Hennessey and Ingalls, Santa Monica

Appendix 2

Data Index

Participatory Observations during Ethnography

Kelly Miller Circus winterquarters November 6-7, 2007 and March 1-14, 2008

“Kelly Miller Circus to take new acts on the road,” Paris News

2008 Kelly Miller season March 15-August 6, 2008

150 Lots over 8000 miles (approx.) and 14 states

73 ‘Official’ research observation days

77 ‘Life’ participation days

260 Performances observed from bandstand while working

10 Performances observed from audience

7 Performances observed from outside tent

10 Performances participated in bareback horse and elephant acts

82 Lot Diagrams

4 Notebooks (100 pages each) of fieldnotes

1 Notebook (100 page) of compiled ‘jottings’

6 Calendars with daily notes

4 Advance tickets

2 Advance PR materials

2009 Kelly Miller season July 31st, August 1-2, 2009

3 performances observed from audience

3 performances observed from outside tent

1 set up observed

Artefacts and Materials gathered during Ethnography

16 Route Cards

1 Rule sheet

127 Route Slips

March (14), April (30), May (27), June (25), July (27), August (4)

Advertising Posters

-Plainville, MA on June 28th, 2008

-Camden, NY on July 14th, 2008

-Girard, PA on July 26th, 2008

-Kelleys Island, OH on Aug 5th, 2008

3 Performance Program

9 Posted running orders (changes)

3 Music cue sheets (altered cues included in 'jottings' notebook)

2 Show meeting notices

14 Road Maps (annotated)

1 Layout pin

1 Prayer book from the Travelling Circus Ministries

Costume pieces

-3 pairs of fishnet stockings

-2 'foot bands'

-2 uniform polo shirts

Circus Report vol. 36, no.7 April 11th, 2008

Circus Report vol. 36, no. 7 June 27th, 2008

Photographs & Video (organized by route)

1959 photographs, 66 videos (03:31:07)

Hugo, OK on November 5th, 2007

38 photographs (cemetery, winterquarters)

Peru, IN on November 14-16th

54 photographs (Hall of Fame, town centre, parade)

Baraboo, WI on November 27-29th

28 photographs (museum, town centre)

Hugo, OK on March 1st-15th, 2008

35 photographs (winterquarters, town)

Idabel, OK on March 16th

3 photographs (stakes)

Royse City, OK on March 18th

6 photographs (layout)

Whitesboro, TX on March 19th

4 photographs (ropes)

Frisco, TX on March 21st-23rd

43 photographs (set-up crowd, Easter)

White Settlement, TX on March 25th

8 photographs (make-up, backdoor)

Grand Saline, TX on March 29th

10 photographs (pull on)

East Tawakoni, AR on March 30th

4 photographs (inside tent)

Gilmer, TX on March 31st

12 photographs (theatre show)

Naples, TX on April 1st

13 photographs (lot, town)

Ashdown, AR on April 2nd

5 photographs (inside tent)

DeQueen, AR on April 3rd

5 photographs (inside tent)

Glenwood, AR on April 4th

45 photographs (gymnasium show)

Ozark, AR on April 8th

2 vidcos (:37, 1:02) (tightening ropes)

Harrison, AR on April 9th-10th

5 photographs (evening gathering)

Mountain Home, AR on April 11th-12th

3 photographs (lot)

Mountain View, AR on April 13th

5 photographs (backlot)

Eminence, MO on April 15th

1 photograph (town)

Cahokia, IL on April 19th

3 photographs (house maintenance)

Mascoutah, IL on April 21st

10 photographs (lay-out)

Hillsboro, IL on April 22nd

7 photographs (weather)

Carlyle, IL on April 23rd

2 photographs (elephants)

Carmi, IL on April 25th

1 photograph (laundry)

Toledo, IL on April 28th

1 photograph (morning drive)

Palestine, IL on April 28th

4 photographs (set-up)

5 videos (:14, 1:42, :09, 2:58, :29) (tent raising)

Spencer, IN on May 3rd

2 photographs (elephants)

Pittsboro, IN on May 4th

1 photograph (web burn)

Flora, IN on May 7th

3 photographs (set-up)

3 videos (:20, :21, 1:15)

Mechanicsburg, OH on May 14th

13 photographs (drive, lot)

Cadiz, OH on May 18th

7 photographs (lot, evening gathering)

Avella, PA on May 19th

37 photographs (set-up, lot)

3 videos (:31, :32, :30) (set-up)

Morgantown, WV on May 20-23

7 photographs (social gatherings)

Springfield, WV on May 25th

3 photographs (house)

Thurmont, MD on May 28th

5 photographs (social gathering)

Reistertown, MD on May 29th

5 photographs (social gathering)

West Friendship, MD on May 30th-31st

10 photographs (social gatherings, house maintenance)

Beachwood, NJ on June 11th

8 photographs (social gatherings)

Basking Ridge, NJ

127 photographs (performance, by Peter Erceg)

Washingtonville, NY on June 19th

4 photographs ('bad' parking, 2 by Peter Erceg)

Cummington, MA on June 21st

16 photographs (backdoor, rehearsal, by Peter Erceg)

Spencer, MA on June 22nd

34 photographs (teardown, by Peter Erceg)

Mendon, MA on June 23rd

4 photographs (inside house)

Middleboro, MA on June 26th

20 photographs (house, tent, by Peter Erceg)

Plainville, MA on June 28th

25 photographs (set-up, performance, by Peter Erceg)

East Providence, RI on June 29th

8 photographs (driving, set-up, 5 by Peter Erceg)

Townsend, MA on June 30th

10 photographs (driving, lot)

Pittsfield, MA on July 5th

13 photographs (unusual lot)

Berlin, NY on July 6th

4 photographs (social gathering)

Canajoharie, NY on July 12th

55 photographs (backdoor during performance, unusual lot)

Norwich, NY on July 13th

23 photographs (driving, set-up, backdoor)

Camden, NY on July 14th

55 photographs (performance, lot)

1 video (02:04) (prop performance)

Southwood, NY on July 15th

62 photographs (materials, lot)

Fair Haven, NY on July 16th

16 photographs (materials)

Lima, NY on July 17th

61 photographs (materials, performance)

1 video (03:21) (prop performance)

Sweden, NY on July 18th

38 photographs (materials, set-up)

5 videos (03:20, :23, :23, 3:42, :57) (tent set-up)

Youngstown, NY on July 19th

37 photographs (materials, backdoor)

2 videos (03:57, 03:32) (prop performance)

Alexander, NY on July 20th

40 photographs (house, lot, materials, teardown)

4 videos (01:28, :56, 01:43, 02:04) (teardown)

Springville, NY on July 21st

40 photographs (unusual lot)

Westfield, NY on July 22nd-23rd

44 photographs (set-up, backdoor, lot)

Youngsville, PA on July 24th

29 photographs (unusual lot, set-up)

Union City, PA on July 25th

31 photographs (unusual lot, set-up)

1 video (:19) (set-up)

Girard, PA on July 26th

69 photographs (set-up, town, performance, materials, backdoor, teardown)

2 video (:44, :05) (prop performance, teardown)

Greenville, PA on July 27th

119 photographs (materials, teardown, social gatherings)

11 videos (03:23, :28, :59, 01:03, 01:04, :40, 01:02, :22, :12, 02:31, 01:04)

(teardown)

Chesterland, OH on July 28th

9 photographs (driving, midway)

Middlefield, OH on July 29th-30th

71 photographs (materials, lot, set-up, social gathering)

2 videos (01:14, :39)

Willowick, OH on July 31st

25 photographs (rehearsal, lot, 5 by Sara Greene)

2 videos (:08, :32) (performance)

Sagamore Hills, OH on August 1st

14 photographs (set-up, performance, by Ria Terranova-Webb)

1 video (17:39) (set-up, performance, by Ria Terranova-Webb)

Norwalk, OH on August 2nd-3rd

45 photographs (performance, house maintenance, driving, by Ria Terranova-Webb)

1 video (20:17) (performance, by Ria Terranova-Webb)

Kelleys Island, OH on August 4th-5th

274 photographs (materials, set-up, driving, performance, 32 by Ria Terranova-Webb, 158 by Jim Lewis)

1 professional video (2hrs) (full performance, by Bruce Johnson)

Kelleys Island, OH on August 1st-2nd 2009

69 photographs (set-up, performance, materials, social gathering)

Interviews

Formal (by date)

Vladimir and Olga Smirnoff, Performers, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, WI

August 17th, 2004

-backyard between shows (1hr)

Scott O'Donnell, Circus Owner, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, WI

September 2nd and 3rd, 2004

-library (1hr), office (1hr)

Ria Terranova-Webb and Craig Webb, Mock Interview

November 4th, 2007

-living room (2hrs)

John Fugate, Ringmaster and Special Events Coordinator, International Circus Hall of Fame

November 15th, 2007

-open plan office (2hrs), grounds tour (20mins)

John Ringling North II, Owner, Kelly Miller Circus

Mt. Vernon, OH on May 15th, 2008

-his house (30mins), interrupted by laundry run

Natalie Cainan, Performer and Cookhouse Purchaser, Kelly Miller Circus

North Creek, NY on July 10th, 2008

-my house (2hrs), regularly interrupted by children and animal care

John Ringling North II and Sara Greene, Aerialist, Kelly Miller Circus, tent specialist

Camden, NY on July 14th, 2008

-again, North's house (20mins)

Tavana Brown, Road Office Manager, Kelly Miller Circus

Lima, NY on July 17th, 2008

-road office (1hr)

John Moss, Ringmaster and Performance Director, Kelly Miller Circus

Westfield, NY on July 23rd, 2008

-preferred seats in tent (2hrs)

Chris Beckett, Logistics Person, Kelly Miller Circus

Middlefield, OH on July 29th, 2008

-outside walking around lot (2hrs)

Jim Royal

Middlefield, OH on July 30th, 2008

-his 'front porch' (20mins), interrupted by sudden thunderstorm

Informal (by participant)

Alejandro, Butcher, Kelly Miller Circus

Pittsfield, MA on July 5th, 2008

Armando "Loyale," Performer, Animal Handler and Trainer, Animal Department
Manager, Kelly Miller Circus

Plunstenville, PA on June 14th, 2008

Canajoharie, NY on July 12th, 2008

Springville, NY on July 21st, 2008

Cuco Perez, Butcher and Prop Crew, Kelly Miller Circus

Regular nightly conversations between March 15th and April 17th, 2008.

Southwood, NY on July 15th, 2008

Danny Brown, Transportation Manager and General Purchaser, Kelly Miller Circus
Paulding, OH on May 10th, 2008
Regular nightly conversations between April 10th and July 30th, 2008

Jim Royal, General Manager, Kelly Miller Circus
Showmen's Rest (20mins) in Hugo, OK on November 6th, 2007

John Fugate
Grounds Tour on November 14th, 2007

Luis, Prop Boss, Kelly Miller Circus
Mechanicsburg, OH on May 14th, 2008
Regular nightly conversations between May 5th and July 7th, 2008

Marcella and Harlan, Ticket Taker and PR Clown, Kelly Miller Circus
Winterquarters, March 5th, 7th, and 11th,
East Tawakoni, TX on March 30th, 2008
Cahokia, IL on April 19th, 2008
Sweden, NY on July 18th, 2008

Oscar Perez, Concession Manager, Kelly Miller Circus
Winterquarters, March 6th, 2008
Norwich, NY on July 13th, 2008
Springville, NY on July 21st, 2008
Middlefield, OH on July 29th, 2008

Tavo Perez, Lot Supervisor, Kelly Miller Circus
Hancock, MD on May 27th, 2008
Granville, NY on July 9th, 2008
Union City, PA on July 25th, 2008

Teto Perez, Tent Boss, Kelly Miller Circus

Winterquarters, March 4th, 2008

Hot Springs Village, AR on April 5th, 2008

Ozark, AR on April 8th, 2008

Hillsboro, IL on April 22nd, 2008

Southwood, NY on July 15th, 2008

Casual Daily Conversations during evening performances or social gatherings

**Ben Trumble, Animal Handler, Kelly Miller Circus and Culpepper & Merriweather
Circus**

Casey “McCoy” Cainan, Performer and Animal Trainer, Kelly Miller Circus

Danny Brown

John Moss

“Lucky” Eddie Stracffer, Drummer, Kelly Miller Circus

Luis

Natalie Cainan

Sara Greene

Tavana Brown

Vickie Stracffer, Assistant Office Manager, Ticket Seller, Music, Kelly Miller Circus

Online Diaries

The Mudshow Diaries <http://themudshowdiaries.blogspot.com/>

Followed April 2008 to present

Written by Valerie Berta Torales documenting personal experiences living and working on Kelly Miller Circus. Features a photo out of the back window of house every day as well as descriptions of daily improvisations.

Circus Diaries <http://circusdiaries.blogspot.com/>

Followed April 2008 to present

Written by Casey “McCoy” Cainan (and Radar from September 2009) documenting personal experiences living and working on Kelly Miller Circus. Concentrates on the details of training tigers and animals in general.

Pat Cashin's ClownAlley <http://clownalley.blogspot.com/>

Followed April 2008 to present

Written by Pat Cashin discussing current and historical clowning acts.

A Mudshow Season <http://www.mudshowseason.blogspot.com/>

Followed July 2008 to present

Written by Ben Trumble documenting personal experiences living and working with Kelly Miller Circus and Culpepper & Merriweather Circus as well as general community news and history.

The Adventures of Steve & Ryan <http://steveandryan.blogspot.com/>

Followed November 2009 to present

Written by Steve Copeland documenting the personal experiences of him and his clowning partner living and working on Kelly Miller Circus. Focuses on the successes and failures of the daily performances as well as social activities.

Personal Communication

Fred Dahlinger, (*Circus Historical Society*), email, Feb 5th, 2010, number of circuses

Jim Royal, email, Nov 29th, 2009, area played, history, # of shows

John Wells (*White Tops*)

email, Feb 4th, 2010, number of circuses

email, Feb 5th, 2010, number of circuses

Pat Cashin, email, July 30th, 2009, nature of clowns

Tavana Brown,

email, Oct 20th, 2008, L&L

email, July 14th, 2009, 'interview'

email, Dec 4th, 2009, stats

email, Jan 28th, 2010, jobs

email, Feb 28th, 2010, contracts

'facebook' <http://www.facebook.com> interaction with circus members

From August 10th, 2008 to present

Casey "McCoy" Cainan, Natalie Cainan, Valerie Berta Torales, Vicki Straeffer, Tavana Brown, Sara Greene

300 (approx) text messages to Peter Erceg (partner) describing daily situations

From March 1st-August 6th, 2008

Source Materials

Robert L. Parkinson Circus Library and Research Center at Circus World Museum

Baraboo, Wisconsin November 27-29, 2007

<http://circusworld.wisconsinhistory.org/>

3 Museum brochures

4 Online discussion board printouts

-October 23, 2006 "Is Kelly Miller going out?"

-May 14, 2007 "Recurring High-Wire logistical act."

-June 15, 2007 "Kelly Miller sets up shop."

-August 14, 2007 "Never too late to join the circus."

Kelly Miller Circus archival file

-Thanksgiving menu 1950

-*Hobbies* July 1954

-Lot diagram and grounds permit June 16th, 1955

-*Billboard* article January 12th, 1959

-Employee rule sheet 1960

-Undated Booking Agent sponsor letter approx. 1960

-Official architectural drawings of show tents and layout for 1960 season

-*White Tops* July-Aug 1961

-1964 performance program

-First route card of 1964 season

-1966 performance program

-Last route card of 1967 season

-1987 performance program

-*Bandwagon* vol. 13, no. 1, 1993

-*Bandwagon* vol. 39, no. 2, 1995

-2007 performance program

-*White Tops* vol. 80, no. 4, 2007

International Circus Hall of Fame

Peru, Indiana November 14-16, 2007

<http://www.circushalloffame.com/>

5 Historical society brochures

Guidelines and Rules for submission of candidates to the Hall of Fame

Girard, PA Public Library

July 26th, 2008

“Who was Dan Rice? A Walking Tour Through Girard’s Circus History”

Other Circus Sites and Archives

-Brandmiller Circus Research Center, Miami University, Oxford, OH

-Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY

-Gibson, FL, unincorporated suburb of Sarasota, FL with unique circus zoning laws, similar to Hugo, OK, hosting a variety of winterquarters.

-John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, FL

-Joseph T. McCaddon Circus Collection, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ

-Sarasota, FL, traditional home of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, hosts a variety of winterquarters, Outdoor “Ring of Fame”

Supplementary Sources

Mobility

- Mobilities*, Journal published by Routledge,
- Zelinsky W 1973 *The Cultural Geography of the United States*. Prentice Hall, Inc, Englewood Cliffs
- Zelinsky W 1971 The hypothesis of the mobility transition. *Geographical Review* 61

Performance

- Tulloch J 1999 *Performing Culture: Stories of Expertise and the Everyday*. Sage Publications Ltd, London
- Parkin D, Caplan L and Fisher H eds 1996 *The politics of cultural performance*. Berghahn Books, Providence
- Schechner R and Appel W eds 1990 *By means of performance: intercultural studies of theatre and ritual*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Memory

- Hobsbawm E and Ranger T eds 1983 *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Connerton P 1989 *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Halbwachs M 1950 *On Collective Memory*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago

Method

- Qualitative Research*, Journal published by SAGE
- Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, Journal published by SAGE
- Paterson M 2009 Haptic geographies: ethnography, haptic knowledges and sensuous dispositions. *Progress in Human Geography* 33: 766-88

- Laurier E and Philo C 2006 Cold Shoulders and napkins handed: gestures of responsibility. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 31: 193-207
- Crang M 2005 Qualitative methods: there is nothing outside the text? Progress in Human Geography 29: 225-33
- Crang M 2003 Qualitative methods: touchy, feely, look-see? Progress in Human Geography 274: 494-504
- Crang M 2002 Qualitative method: the new orthodoxy? Progress in Human Geography 26: 647-55
- Rose G 1997 Situating knowledges: positionality, reflexivities and other tactics. Progress in Human Geography 21: 305-20
- Feay-Shaw S 2001 The view through the lunchroom window: An ethnography of a fifth-grade musical. Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education 150: 37-51
- Agar M H 1996 The professional stranger: an informal introduction to ethnography. Academic Press, Inc, San Diego

Circus

- Tait P 2005 Circus Bodies: cultural identity in aerial performance. Routledge, Oxon
- Brantlinger P 1983 Bread & Circuses: Theories of mass culture as social decay. Cornell University Press, Ithaca
- McKennon J 1977 Logistics of the American Circus. Carnival Publishers of Sarasota, Sarasota
- Fellows D W and Freeman A A 1936 This Way to the Big Show: The Life of Dexter Fellows. Halcyon House, New York